

*The de/re-territorialization of struggle in Appalachia: The
legacy of “coal and class” and the cultural politics of
community*

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Abstract

The de/re-territorialization of struggle in Appalachia: the legacy of “coal and class” and the cultural politics of community

Stuart Lorkin

Appalachia is a region that continues to represent a paradoxical place in the geographical imagination of its residents, scholars and popular writers. There is a long and well documented history of the often violent exploitation of its land and people, and a marginalized tradition of protest. The geography of economic, social and political development in the central core region is highly uneven, the product of tensions between raw material extraction such as coal, by capital, political control through an elite-state class, and variously organized social struggles. Studies of social movements within a cultural political framework provided a powerful mechanism of analysing and writing about struggles over social and environmental injustice. Edited volumes by Fisher and Gaventa explore a range of militant particularisms, highly localized, intense actions based on community politics. What are the changing spatial strategies of these movements and what is the role of scale in understanding militant particularism? A geography of struggle in Appalachia locates the importance of tradition, especially the role of memory, the production of free spaces, and how place constructs and is constructed through social struggle. Finally, why is community the focus of these actions, what are the problems associated with social movements who do not question the exclusions of community politics and can an understanding of scale redefine the limits of militant particularisms?

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Chapter I

Introduction

“A jeep passes us, the men inside laughing. We keep walking. The road is now on top of a spoil bank, water and the highwall on one side, a long mud and rock slope on the other. It’s like being on a curving bridge. Women joke, ridiculing the men and their operation.”

(M.A.W. at the occupation of Clear Creek strip mine, 1972.¹)

Appalachia is a region with an extensive history of exploitation of both its people and their environment, leading to conditions of persistent poverty and degradation of the landscape. In response to this oppression have been peoples’ multiple strategies of resistance for self-determination and change, including the evolution of sometimes intense conflicts and the production of a complex political culture. This thesis will examine some local-based social movements in the region and their role as a focus for this counter-hegemonic protest. Grassroots groups are of interest for they may help to intervene in local cultural and political practices, so offer some potential strategies towards alleviating poverty in Appalachia. Some movements such as the unions and a group called Highlander have long histories of organizing, others appeared for just a few years in the 1980s to tackle a single issue.

From accounts written about these various groups, two themes were found to run through their collective histories which seemed critical to the success or failure of their organizational and political strategies. First, collective cultural politics take place within

a social and spatial context, a bricolage or collection of memories reflecting people's agency to manipulate relations of dependence, exploitation and support. Second, is the ability of social movements to understand, control, utilize or overcome the various geographical scales of social relations, including their own local dependence.

Context in Appalachia

This project began as an investigation into the geography and history of Appalachia, of the various narratives used to represent social relations between a landscape and a people both commonly portrayed as poor. Geographical variations in poverty are highly uneven in Appalachia, though the central region that is the setting of this study continues to suffer in periods of economic decline. Economic, social and political development in southern West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and the bordering areas of Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee are marked by processes usually associated with Third World regions. Raw material extraction, particularly coal and timber, and basic industrial processing creates dependency on a handful of companies and products, making local communities vulnerable to cycles of boom and bust.

These same communities however have a long tradition of resisting these perceived social and environmental injustices, claiming their rights to decent work conditions and access to resources. From the earliest cases of timber companies logging land without permission, through the coal companies basically stealing it, various strategies have been used in Appalachia, though too often they are portrayed as passive and ignorant. Many

¹ Quoted in Bingham (1993, 17). Clear Creek is in Knott Co., Kentucky.

waves of migration have filtered through the hollows, adding many more traditions, practices and values on how to deal with hegemonic power.

Various approaches could and have been taken to understand poverty and culture, each of which have influenced my own thinking and this thesis. Postmodernism traces the social construction of poverty, the power of discourse in limiting how we tackle problems. Statistics are useful to show the variations in rates of poverty, to identify those communities suffering from economic restructuring. Regional descriptions and works of fiction help us to imagine other lives, to flesh out the meaning of agricultural traditions and their erosion, and the desperate struggle to bring the unions to the coalfields. Finally cultural politics has the most significant contribution in explaining the structures of power and the agency of many Appalachians both individually and together in their attempts to control history and geography through the struggles for memory and landscape.

Social movements

Social movements are used to foreground collective agency, which attempt to intervene through political actions and cultural strategies, yet in a highly uneven manner. It is this “geography of struggle” in Appalachia, with its many forms of self-help, resistance to exploitation and ideology of empowerment to which I aim to contribute. The point of entry and analytical focus for this thesis are recent examples of community activism that I label militant particularism (Harvey 1995 after Raymond Williams). I argue that since the 1970s these scattered, place-based movements have emerged to mark a transformation in the cultural politics of the region.

What distinguishes militant particularisms from other forms of social movements, are their location in and focus at the local scale. Often this form of community activism concentrates on fighting a single issue, has an intense nature, and confronts the problem head on. Most significantly it is a collective mode of struggle that privileges, even fetishizes community as the means of a common identity, legitimacy and constituency for mounting actions. These protests symbolize both the decline of traditional labor-based struggles founded on the extraction of coal and a re-evaluation of cultural dynamics other than the dialectics of class.

Objectives and Method

Using a conceptual framework of cultural politics, the objective of this thesis is to examine the changing spatial strategies of social movements in Appalachia, in particular some cases of militant particularism. Why are place and scale so fundamental to understanding these examples of community activism, especially the role of memory and strategic alliances.

Poststructural theory, in particular its use in anthropology, has opened up the notion of doing field work to critique and re-evaluate how research can represent power relations, particularly in the study of community and conflicts between them (Tsing 1993). Narrative-analysis is a way of writing about cultural politics, “of how the smallest details of walk and talk are politic, are by-products of political constructions” (Marcus 1997, 217). Hegemony operates in all spheres, through class exploitation, sexism, racism, homophobia and so on, so we need a language to represent how these come together in our chosen field. Any community has a number of competing interests, many

of which are silenced and the researcher should be aware of these in deciding the scales to investigate and questions to ask.

The following is a list of case studies I draw upon in this thesis, giving some basic points of comparison. These cases are useful empirical and theoretical studies which demonstrate the different issues and problems of collective political strategies under extreme conditions of hegemony. The cases are grouped according to how the strategies they employ follow a traditional, union organizing mode dependent upon a shared experience and memory of coal production and class-conflict, alternative ideas of economy and collective action, or some hybrid of them both:

Traditional

- Bingham (1993) *Stopping the bulldozers, Knott County, Kentucky*

Strip mining, local women, traditional strike

- Gavenata (1980) Clear Fork Valley, Kentucky

History of company, union and community

- Judkins (1993) Black Lung Association

Traditional lobbying internally to UMW, grassroots

- Sessions and Ansley (1993); Couto (1993) *Pittston 3, Virginia*

Union takeover of plant-free space

- Yarrow, Mike (1990) *Voices from the coalfields*

New community/regional development

- Hamilton (1990); Hamilton and Ryan (1993) *The Community Farm Alliance*

Kentucky, small tobacco farming, community development, diversify production

- Luttnell (1990) *Community-based economic education*

- Taylor, Charles (1990) *Workers rights project*
South Carolina, regional and community, voter registration and legal representation
- Weiss, Chris (1993) *Coal employment project*
Regional development through women's work
- Weller, et al (1990) *Ivanhoe*, Virginia
Plant closing, community development by local women

Hybrid

- Allen (1993) *Save our Cumberland Mountains*
Strip mining, Tennessee, Traditional to hybrid, local grassroots, litigation
- Cable (1993) *Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens*
Tanning pollution, hybrid action
- Glen (1993) *Highlander*
Community and regional development and hybrid approaches, education, leadership
- Szakos (1990); Szakos (1993) *Kentuckians for the Commonwealth*
Hybrid resistance to undertaxation of coal mining, grassroots, multi-environmental issues

Organization of the thesis

A de and re-territorialization of struggle in Appalachia is a two-part process. The first part (chapter three) is theoretical, the objective is to build a dictionary of concepts

located in social theory. The second part of this process (remaining chapters), discusses the specifics of collective politics in Appalachia. To do this I locate struggles for power within a general abstraction of society into three structured groups: capital, the state and community. Each of these sites of power is not homogenous, with internal differences and conflicts, yet remains a useful starting point of analysis. Space and time are understood to both produced and experienced through a process of discursive regulation into distinct regimes, where meanings and practices are readily understood and reproduced. Within these regimes, concrete places and scale are constructed to bind people and place together into patterns of mutual dependence. A framework of the cultural politics of location enables us to highlight social movements as critical agents of transformation, empowerment and ethics. This framework uses basic concepts of hegemony, ideology and consciousness that together produce the regime of symbolic and material practices, the strategies for negotiating agency and structure.

Chapter four examines narratives from individual and collective memories of landscapes, a regional history of social relations from conflict to cooperation. This narrative traces the transformation from a coal and class legacy to modern community politics. Contemporary militant particularisms were able to gain power as a series of crises in the regime of accumulation based on coal, the local state and the union, all experienced profound restructuring around the 1970s. Issues of regional development, especially the tension between top-down and grassroots or more locally oriented actions are key to the discussion.

Chapters five and six address the geographical questions of power in the case studies of community activism. First, how do they conceptualize space, in particular a

notion of “free spaces” as an idealized notion to escape dominant practices and discourses? What traditions do these movements draw upon, especially the role of memory and its embeddedness in local landscapes? Which places become militant whilst others remain apparently quiescent and is this a useful distinction? How so social movements develop in place to organize support and intervene in local hegemonies? How do groups develop across scales and issues to explode the definition I began with of militant particularism? Finally, why is community the focus of these narratives of activism, what are the problems of doing so and how can an analysis of scale transform our concept of community?

Chapter II

Research questions and methodology

*“Our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting...
a politicization of memory that distinguishes nostalgia, that longing for
something to be as once it was, a kind of useless act, from that
remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present.”*
(bell hooks (1994) *Yearning*, page 147.)

Introduction

This chapter serves to structure the body of the thesis in two ways. In the first section, I outline the three “major” and some “minor” objectives, and then proceed to suggest how these aims intersect. The second section of this chapter then deals with methodology.

My first major objective is to draw out some of the more salient aspects of poststructural theory, in particular their notions of cultural transformation and power. I claim that these ideas can be used to produce an explicitly geographical understanding of cultural politics, one that emphasizes space and scale. The second objective is a preliminary contextualization of this framework in Appalachia. A region should be both a narrative and analytical tool, not only a convenient name, a means of locating the events and processes being investigated and a critical tool for understanding them. Appalachia should be understood as a socially constructed, somewhat integrated set of places, containing collective historical memories of dependence and resistance.

The third major objective, is to argue that a dramatic reterritorialization of struggle is occurring within Appalachia, caused by internal and external geographical changes.

Traditional avenues of challenging the hegemony of local coal operators through the United Mineworkers of America (UMW), are being replaced by local and regional social movements with different spatial strategies. Transformations of the Appalachian landscape can be better understood through combining theories of scale and space with the particular histories of coal, class and union politics. What emerges is a picture that focuses on a series of tensions within social movement strategies: the meaning and practice of community, leadership, ideology and forms of oppositional practice.

The questions outlined above require a methodology which enables me to synthesize secondary case studies of movements in Appalachia, with a broad range of theoretical approaches. “Narrative analysis” is a condensed term I use for a form of engaged research and participation, used primarily by certain anthropologists I have encountered, notably Tsing (1993) and Comaroff and Comaroff (1991). Two of the most salient literatures that have informed the debates written into these examples of ethno-histories are feminism and realism. Texts written through both frameworks have reconceptualized subject-object relations, both those in “the field” and our representations of it. Some brief examples will demonstrate the advantages of how this methodology interweaves stories and concepts at local through global scales. I conclude this chapter with an introduction to the case studies, examples of militant particularism which can help to transform our geographies of Appalachia and elsewhere.

Objectives

Rethinking power

If the central concern of this research is to understand how specific movements utilize strategies of resistance and work towards alternative development, it is necessary to first locate these struggles within a conceptual framework, a language of knowledge and power. Here, the first major objective and the subject of chapter three is thus: How do poststructural theories help us to understand the production, reproduction and transformation of social conflict and cooperation between individuals and groups?

(Too) much of the poststructural literature has been a rather partisan battle between proponents of structural versus agency-based explanations of society. Instead of re-drawing these distinctive and oppositional trenches, I begin by focusing upon a broadly defined “structurationist” school. In summary, the first minor aim here is to see how individuals act intentionally within a pre-existing, but not pre-determining context.² In most of the neo-marxist literature, social change is pre-dominantly explained through a strategy of social divisions, over an analysis of culture, local knowledge and subjective meaning. Thus a second minor objective is to show how material and symbolic aspects of culture together produce more subtly textured uneven relations of power. Further, these relations are necessarily productions *of* and *in* time and space. The challenge is to specify human and environmental geographies whilst retaining the analytic power that social theory can provide.

² This is my take on that over-used quote of Marx: “Men make history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing.”

These minor objectives lead towards the field of cultural politics, a term I then use to frame this narrative of militant particularisms in Appalachia. Cultural politics comes from Antonio Gramsci's (1985) work on hegemony, the power that elite groups exert over the masses. Gramsci attempts to avoid a narrow focus on class, instead he emphasizes the cultural terrain of struggle and ideology through which class tensions are fought. Feminism, as an example of cultural politics, provides a particularly revealing approach to understanding the connections between theory and strategy in social movements, centered on a broadly defined theme of social injustice. Key areas of concern include: identity, marginality, difference and representation, which are all salient in the case of Appalachian cultural politics. Militant particularism is used by Raymond Williams to describe instances of localized opposition to hegemonic effects, as individuals come together in an organized fashion with counter ideas and practices to the dominant ones.

Finally, social theory is used to define how the social reproduction of difference is explicitly related to geographic themes. Two core conceptual debates are local dependence and scale. Research on local dependence sees difference not only as historical and cultural legacies, but as necessary relations between primary actors in space -- capitalists, the local state and community groups (Cox and Mair 1988; Herod 1991a; 1991b). Social movements' connection to place has not been easily or clearly theorized within poststructuralism,³ and the geographic theory of local dependence is one means of

³ A number of authors such as Escobar (1995), Steinmetz (1994) and Laclau and Mouffe (1985) do poststructural theorizing on social movements, though they privilege their discursive formation as reactions to certain aspects of modernity--alienation, marginalization--ignoring local and material processes of mobilization.

demonstrating this link between social activism and the local. Geographical scale is introduced as a concept which I see as fundamental to telling a convincing story of the transformation of struggle in Appalachia. Strategies of conflict and alliance operate to contextualize and inform action at every scale of this powerful hegemony. Through understanding the interaction of local and global processes in a given locality, progressive political actors can become both more sensitive to actively negotiating differences and hence more successful.

Regional transformation

Having outlined a general and abstract theory of power, a *spatial politics of difference* in chapter three, it is then necessary to outline the context of power which has developed in Appalachia. The second major objective, chapter four, is thus: To understand the regional transformation of Appalachia, notably the formation of a regional and local discursive regime of regulation. Basically this is a hegemonic regime of extremely exploitative social relations, centered on the production of coal and other natural resources, alongside the formation of a distinctive union and class politics. Chapter four will show both the dialectical character of this structure and the differences between local regimes.

Regional histories are often constructed using ideas of “development,” a highly contested concept in academic discourses and experiences in Appalachia. One minor aspect to chapter four is to summarize the many representations of regional memory and practice, including those of development into types or schools. Each of these alternative “schools” of description and explanation has profoundly different implications for

tackling the long-standing dichotomy between rich and poor in the region. Challenging the cultural stereotypes and models of development which result from these alternative constructions of knowledge, forms a critical tenet of any movement's efforts to improve education.

Academic discourses are one part of this extremely complex system of socialization, one often portrayed as normalizing or hegemonic. Here I use the term discursive regulation (Peet 1996 and see introduction) to examine how the principal components of capital, the state and communities interact to produce and transform Appalachia. Competing ideologies are brandished by individuals and groups, "consumed" by personal and collective consciousness--the systems through which we understand our place within these hegemonic fields of power. This alternative framework, used in the second part of the chapter, summarizes the salient events and structures of this "coal-class" regime, highlighting histories of dependence and struggle, using both mainstream and more radical sources. Histories from case studies are then used to show that a crisis of legitimacy occurred in the early 1970s, due to both internal and external changes to this hegemony. Further, I argue that these shifts in power were critical to the opening up of a space for new instances of militant particularism, struggles which further challenged the status quo. These collective actions were themselves a reaction to changing conditions outside the coalfields, shaped by the specific needs of local communities.

Reterritorializing struggle

The central concern of this thesis, is to understand the geography of contemporary social movements in Appalachia. What were the salient strategies of these emerging

collectives? and Why were space and scale so important to estimating their successes and failures? What are the dominant forms of oppositional organizing? How did it change from the early 1970s? Why did they take the form they did?

Two of the more critical minor concerns are to identify whether these strategies signify either *continuity* or *change* in the process of struggle. Different forms may or may not show that this process has altered. Another objective is to assess the pattern of organization, including the role of leadership, the degree of hierarchy versus autonomous actions, and finally a groups' success in incorporating grassroots opinions and strategies into its overall perspective.

Many, if not most political groups appear to fairly reflect the social composition of the communities their claim to represent. Appalachia is widely represented in academia, the media and popular culture as white, poor and working class, so their homogeneity might not appear to be a major issue. Many of the case studies, however, some of which appear here, do not explicitly deal with, or more usually simplify, issues of gender, race and class which undoubtedly arose during activism. This question addresses the problem of incorporating marginalized groups within communities, for example by combating stereotypes through education, both in and outside the organization. Finally, given these exclusions, what is the potential for "empowerment," the problem at the heart of the development debate?

The final set of minor objectives are the most explicitly geographical. Generally, how locally dependent are these movements now? This is partially answered by locating the multiple networks which groups now use for support and advice. Many of my concerns eventually lead me back to the ubiquity of community as a foundational

ideology or logic, unit of action and practical organization, and ultimately the goal of collective strategies. This pattern applies to Appalachia and other areas of action and research.⁴ Mining, particularly in the coal camps located in isolated hollows, created a powerful internal cohesion between miners, an *us* versus *them*. Yet, what divisions were and are hidden by this ideology of community, and who do they hurt most? Whose community and whose culture will get to define the viable alternatives to mainstream capitalist “development as usual?”

Methodology

A section on research methodology is a way of explicitly linking the questions outlined above to the answers found in later chapters. Indeed, the approach chosen has a profound influence on how those questions are formulated, the objects or “data” which are included in the study, how the analysis is performed and finally the representation as a text. There are a wide range of tools available to social scientists and I utilize different sets of them for the next three chapters. Chapter three provides the conceptual framework using the standard method of a literature review, drawn mostly from work in social theory. Concepts are identified, authors and texts cited, providing a definitional, synthetic discourse. Chapter four takes a fairly straightforward narrative approach, outlining the major schools of representation on the region before developing the critical

⁴ Laura Pulido talks about similar issues in inner city L.A. at a paper given at the Charlotte meeting, AAG, 1996. The purpose of this research is thus not to claim any uniqueness to organizing strategies in Appalachia, rather that one must understand context to know why certain ones emerged and maybe speculate which are the most appropriate to use.

events and processes of Appalachia's discursive regulation. Various stories will be used to illustrate the idea of a powerful hegemony, produced through a historical materialist account of social struggle. Chapter five applies the knowledge of the previous chapters with secondary material from contemporary social movements in the region and it is this idea of doing narrative analysis which I develop below.

One central problem of methodology is identified in the opening quote to the chapter. How can academic narratives ensure that people's experience is included both as a valid form of knowledge and more politically, as a means to help generate the research agenda? People think and act collectively, so memories of events must be located within larger discursive fields, fields which structure symbolic and material power over others. With this in mind, I deploy three bodies of literature to answer my objectives regarding the spatial strategies of organizing efforts in Appalachia. In three sections on realism, feminism and narrative analysis respectively, I set out a structured methodology, mostly as a series of questions to constantly consider throughout my research, rather than a concrete model or mold to pour empirical evidence into. Unfortunately, there are immediately limits set by my choice of using solely secondary sources, which prevents an interactive dialogue, the process advocated by feminist and other literature concerned with social change and empowerment (Katz 1994). Instead, the following sections deal with conceptualizing power relations within existing texts, so as not to silence already marginalized knowledge and histories, but to bring those tensions to the fore.

Realism begins to question and unsettle established notions of power and knowledge. It does so by transferring the concept of causality from natural science and applying it to the more ambiguous realm of explanation in the social sciences. Analysis is no longer

simply “revealing structural truths” but lies in describing practically adequate explanations, themselves embedded within specific contexts. *Feminism* goes further, asserting that social relations are not only uncertain but are both personal and political. From these debates emerges an understanding of the research “field” of study as a highly political terrain, which cannot be neutrally narrated to a passive audience. A central concern here is the issue of silence. Feminism can be a critical method of strategically uncovering marginalized experiences through which to alter our perspectives and ask more appropriate questions. *Narrative analysis* provides a method for integrating these concerns with concrete material from diverse sources. Ethnographic, political-economy, historical, contemporary, primary and secondary sources can be made to converse with one another. By equally privileging interpretation and causation, structure and contingency, a useful story of the cultural politics of social reproduction and conflict may be told.

The road to/of/from Realism

In a piece of work which claims to evoke the analytic power and subtlety of discourse theory and feminism, why should I begin with a realist methodology? Though realism ultimately fails to capture the diverse nature of power, especially the role of language and culture or their ambiguous structures, it remains a useful guide to good and bad procedures when undertaking social analysis. It begins by questioning the apparent stability of structures, the problems of using spatio-temporal *patterns* to indicate underlying *processes* and instead highlights the centrality of *mechanisms* in mediating and ordering events or actions. In geography, Andrew Sayer has been the principal

proponent and defender of realist philosophy. Feminists and Marxists within the discipline have concurrently attempted to apply and re-theorize it.

Perhaps realism's most lasting contribution to social science has been an attempt to vigorously define a language of social process through which different studies can be more readily compared and structures clarified--realism's ultimate goal. Unfortunately, a list of terms: events, structures, necessary, contingent, mechanism, abstract, concrete, make both theoretical statements and realist narratives quite sterile. Hence my reservations about realism's wholesale application and the need to include the feminist and ethnographic approaches to theory outlined below.

The introduction to this chapter identified one of realism's objectives to be the translation of objective certainty in the natural sciences to the subjective material of the social sciences. One consequence of this movement is to change from a search for universal laws to locating causation in the interaction between people and their environments. Sayer asserts that geographers too often look first for patterns, whereas "causation is not a matter of regularities in events but rather of the mechanisms which produce them" (1985, 168). Mechanisms come from the complex networks of social interactions, so we must first know this context, not apply structures and therefore explanations directly from other studies.

Realism's core methodology is the process of *abstraction*, moving from *concrete* objects or concepts which are many-sided such as people, to the abstract, where only one salient aspect is privileged, such as class relations (Sayer 1992). Scale is also important, for instance when looking at industrial restructuring, local, regional, national and global mechanisms are all considered. All require separate abstraction. For instance it is

nonsense to conceptualize “technology change” as a single process for it has multiple means of creating and destroying jobs for different groups. One could first measure the impact of changing technologies at different scales. A model of mechanisms would include a study of how alternative technologies are sought in different places as a response to various practices of corporate restructuring and state realignment.

Central to the process of abstraction is differentiating necessary from contingent relations. The necessary class relation between a coal mine owner and a worker provides a powerful explanation of social tension in Appalachia. Thus an event such as a coal strike is a knowable, almost natural outcome which cannot be reduced to the unique local circumstances of an employer-employee relation (Sayer 1992). By contrast, a contingent relation between two neighbors in a neighborhood can have many possible forms. Conflict or friendship can only be explained by knowing their mutual history of events within the cultural constructs which have informed their actions. Realism undertheorizes agency and do can do little with this.

Sayers’ full and overly dense account of realism (1992) refines these definitions, mostly by qualifying the dualisms which he has reconstructed. Thus “not all objects are empirically observable, nor are all abstract aspects of objects unobservable” (1992, 87). Sayer’s “Causal analysis” asks what makes, produces, creates, generates and determines change. Power then operates through mechanisms of social relations, which tell us what *can* happen, for realism affirms that we cannot *know* a process, so must instead produce models which are practically adequate for explanation. Prediction is no longer certain, so research knowledge should be firmly tied to changing social practice.

One of the most fundamental shifts in social science in recent years is a constant reassessment of the “position” of the researcher, research subjects and the context within which they all exist. This issue is developed further below under feminism. The majority of science presents the researcher as an active if neutral subject, who studies passive objects from this fully objective vantage point, an authority gained through the rationality accorded by prior knowledge (Foucault 1980). Realism questions this for a number of theoretical and practical reasons, principally the individual bias or “social lenses” which we all have. Sayer claims to reduce the power differences inherent in this by emphasizing the need for multiple, linked studies, mixing abstract and concrete methods. Hermeneutics is part of this approach, demonstrating the intersubjective and therefore highly biased nature of all relations. Realism is extremely optimistic about this problem of bias, advocating awareness and discussion, akin to Habermas’ communicative action as a method to achieve truth through consensus.⁵

Realism thus offers some useful objectives, yet falls short of dealing with explicit uneven relations of power. This weakness arises because it does not conceive differentiated forms of power, only necessary and contingent relations. Also, there is no room for ambiguity or agency, for institutions and mechanisms are conceived as the real locations of power. One gets the impression that Sayer and others see differences and struggles over meaning as the result of ignorance and misunderstanding, a quite elitist and privileged perspective. Consequently, realism denies marginal knowledge any intellectual legitimacy. The next section explains how feminist methodologies integrate

⁵ Seminar on Social Theory, Dick Peet, 1996, Clark University.

and promote alternative ideas, principally through a shift to replacing “explanation” with “praxis” as the core objective. Note that difference and marginal knowledge are used to ground feminist studies in contrast to realism’s search for central structures and the necessary order of things.

Feminist tools

This section on feminism extends and challenges realism in a number of ways: redefining objectivity, subjectivity, the social production and construction of identity and challenging dominant representations of people and place. Central to this argument is what Nast (1994) terms redefining the "field" as a contested zone, not a laboratory or place of observation. That is, to foreground agency and demonstrate that all research is inherently political. Mohanty (1991) and Rocheleau (1995) show theoretically and practically the role the researcher can play as translator and activist in chosen fields, interpreting difference and negotiating alliances. Though feminists deal with processes at all scales of time and space to trace regimes of capitalism, patriarchy and the state, their aim is to construct these categories as produced and reproduced contextually. Specifically, fieldwork helps to build knowledge which can be used to change this intersection of processes in particular sites. This approach requires what Haraway (1991) terms "partial perspectives" to construct situated knowledges upon categories whose boundaries are fluid because fluidity, not structure, is the nature of power. These narrative and political strategies oppose dominant ones, often by including knowledge from the margins. It is through representing these silenced memories of everyday life, struggle and imagination that alternative futures and research are made possible.

Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto (1991) illuminate structures of historical domination, particularly in the practice of science. The alternative she proposes is radically anti-essentialist, blurring the boundaries between explanations which are rooted in mythical, technical, organic and textual ideology.⁶ Multiple ideas about politics and other practices converge and the struggle becomes over the postmodern synthesis of cybernetic organism--the cyborg. In its disturbing schism from history and origin, the cyborg figure represents a site for "leaky" distinctions: human/animal, organism/machine, physical/nonphysical. The unified rational political subject of democracy was and is a powerful yet limiting myth. The cyborg myth undermines this "transcendent authorization of interpretation" (Haraway 1991:153). Between nature and culture and production and reproduction, its vision is always partial and between. Rational science turned its cyclopean gaze on the world, focusing on one truth, blurring and distancing the Other to justify violent acts of alterity.

A partial perspective offers a re-valuing of subjectivity, difference, and the situatedness of people, a view from the edge.⁷ Unlike relativism, Haraway does not reject but reclaims objectivity as the shared understanding within a specific social and political context. Collective knowledge is vital to the concept of location. Adrienne Rich (1986) offered some of the earliest thoughts on moving away from a politics grounded in identity and *Towards a politics of location*. Authority of representation comes not from a

⁶ Paper by author on Political Ecology--"Monstrous metaphors in the struggle for nature," Clark University, 1995.

transcendent claim as “woman” but a particular body. There is no natural “we.” There is a responsibility to balance one’s own oppression by place, race, class and gender with the material and symbolic advantages of that specific location. Identity merely names, where location recognizes our partiality and our privilege. Saying “You cannot speak for me. I cannot speak for us” is not grounds for erecting barriers designating an authentic truthful understanding from one of imperialistic intervention. It is a call to recognize and respect existing ideas and practices which may be more suitable than imposing those produced at and for the center.

Transforming science into a social project requires two key elements within geographical research--mapping and fieldwork. Mapping power relations uncovers different conditions, ways of knowing and resistance, both dominant and counter. Only then is it possible to ground theory in everyday lives and struggles (Mohanty 1991). Placing the commitment to struggle for change as the basis to inform both theory and practice, makes accurate mapping of power relations on the landscape critical to feminist projects.

Central to making these knowledge claims is fieldwork to test both theory and strategy, allowing individuals and groups to negotiate the forms this knowledge will take. The first step is to denaturalize the field (Nast 1994) so that it is not only a single, physical, bounded place somewhere else. Choosing which field is a practice contingent on many factors. Katz (1994) researches two fields--the reproduction of knowledge for

⁷ See Winter edition of *Signs* 1997 for a review and postmodern reflection on this “feminist standpoint theory.” Hartsock and others claims that claims to truth, knowledge and reality are created through material experiences. Its critics argue that it does not

girls in the Sudan and struggles over education in Harlem--as critical sites or windows on local and global processes. Each provides a partial place to stand. Unlike hegemonic scientists who seek to define a core of truth, many feminists are more comfortable between fields of knowledge, recognizing that we are always in and between multiple fields. Indeed, working with others as partially insider and outsider encourages critical questions of relations between core, periphery and the boundaries we construct between them.

As researchers, our actions and intentions are defined and help redefine the politics of our chosen and imposed fields so that objectives, both critical and liberatory, can be made more explicit. To summarize, the field is a place where there is mutual learning, meaningful differences and workable affinities within encounters structured by dominance (Katz 1994, 70). Affinity becomes essential for situating researchers, research subjects and the projects they build. The questions that come out are: what counts? which context? how do affinities change over time? what is the researcher's role? and, what is critical? (Rocheleau 1995). Doing research is not forbidden, for we are always in multiple fields -- there are no natural homes without personal politics. "We are always, at some level, somewhere, in a state of betweenness, negotiating various degrees and kinds of difference" (Nast 1994, 57).

The feminist practice of research includes a number of methods or strategies linked to the above theories which should be used before, during and after individual pieces of fieldwork. Though it is not possible to employ these methods to this thesis, they are still

consider the simultaneous discursive construction of material reality, nor the relationship between different standpoints.

worth considering when developing the framework of study. Situating the self foregrounds what aspects of your location are implicit in that context, complicity or privilege in power, and uses this for positive ends. It would mean attributing power and agency to groups such as third world women. In this process, information may be revealed which may empower or jeopardize certain groups, the danger of making “the practices of the oppressed visible to those who dominate” (Katz 1994, 71). Recognizing that conversations within the research process are seriously impacted by individual and group relations, and by the process of making ends explicit, the researcher can act as a translator between fields, always as both insider and outsider.

hooks’ quote reminds us that perhaps the most difficult practice in feminist methodology is a commitment to incorporating marginal geographies. A powerful tool is the use of oral histories, not just as evidence but as a way of representing strategies to deal with contradiction, opposition and affinity as natural everyday aspects of life. Thus formal politics are not privileged as a site of struggle and social movements become a more encompassing platform for social transformation. Returning to Rich, Kobayashi (1994, 76) asks “not whether our position of power and authority denies us the right to conduct research, but, rather, how we can use our privilege to social ends.” Through comparing oral and other histories of communities “perhaps it is possible to be less fixed on the discovery of “original causes.” It might be more useful to ask, How do these values and behaviors get repeated generation after generation?” (Enloe 1983, Ch. 8). Placing social movements at the center of understanding poverty and change in Appalachia is another example of foregrounding the margins.

Writing, narrative, analysis

Feminism and realism thus provide many insights into the research process, notably in situating subjects in political and cultural fields. Here I look to the next stage in research methodology, to writing and particularly to two traditions, ethnography and political economy, for theories and examples of how to simultaneously narrate concepts within a story of struggle and change. The turn towards more self-reflexive narratives in social science is evidence of a dissatisfaction with traditional scientific writing, which tends to erase different perspectives and produce abstract analyses and inhumane accounts of human practice. Explicitly using a narrative methodology is a claim to reveal “other truths,” that a singular, objectively written text could not.⁸ There is an additional, political claim, that through asserting alternative voices, particularly to the dominant mode of Western rational thought, structures of power could be challenged and transformed. The problem for academics thus shifts from “understanding reality” to distinguishing between and producing narratives, stories which can subvert hegemonic relations and not actively reproduce them.

The puzzle is how to represent events, people, objects and processes as they intersect at specific times and places. A narrative is a piece of communication which does this through a selective appropriation of past events, mostly arranged temporally though not necessarily in a strictly linear fashion. This text is then held together by specified or implied relations--a plot of events and characters. Plots are attempts at closure, a revelation, the answering of a question or objective, achieved through demonstrating

causality and dependence. Some basic questions must become explicit in political storytelling: Who gets to tell/write it? What constitutes a good story? What is the purpose of a narrative--to persuade, to teach, to amuse? How to best portray different themes and angles--an academic or folk language, a monologue or collaborative project?

In summary, we are always involved in storytelling, tales which are fashioned and retold in specific, enabling and constraining relations of power. It is through these stories that we make sense of everyday life. Different narrative modes are thus complex strategies to develop certain themes and silence others. Though not strictly in opposition, there is a tendency in social science towards two narrative structures to represent the world: political economy/explanatory and ethnography/interpretative.

Political economy tends to privilege understanding the causal structures behind events. Sayer (1989) in the context of new regional geography, describes how the application of political economy to locality studies, had produced overly materialist and structuralist perspectives at the expense of culture. "Realism roots theory and explanation in the discovery of necessity" (*ibid.*, 258), separating abstract from concrete research. For reasons including bias, the ubiquitous and apparent mimesis of the labor-capital relation, capitalist exploitation and accumulation are favored over other cultural structures. Abstract analyses are also prone to three hazards: misidentification of salient structures, functionalism and structuralism, with their lack of a purposive agent.

An example of a political economic narrative is the regulation school. Broadly their objective is to produce explanations for socio-economic change, emphasizing the role of

⁸ These introductory remarks on narrative from seminar by Dr. Patricia Ewick, Clark University, 1996.

social institutions and other contingencies, hence structures are less deterministic than traditional Marxism. Authors such as Amin and Robbins (1990) produce grand narratives of the relations between accumulation, crises, development and institutions, in this study tracing the articulation of meso-concepts such as firm linkages to identify trends towards postfordism in the Third Italy. Accounts like these are powerful and seductive, yet they often fail to provide adequate evidence of these mechanisms of change; they only outline the pattern. Symbolic systems of power, such as the stereotyping of women as mothers and homemakers, even the existence of homework, is absent from most regulationist explanations of a new division of labor which is highly gendered.⁹

Both ethnographic methodology and humanities theoretical frameworks take a critical stance to the possibility of producing “practically adequate” explanations. Their first step is a reduction in the research scale to the sites of everyday life, the home, work, community. General processes such as capitalist incorporation and state control can best be known through local contexts and processes of social reproduction (Katz 1991), counter to Sayer’s (1992) contention that geography explains only contingent matters. Hermeneutics, the study of the intersubjective processes through which we construct meaning, shows that multiple interpretations exist of one event, object or relation. Ethnography is vital to preserving these differences which are critical to the democratizing of academic research, to prevent alternative perspectives being collapsed into one dominant narrative.

⁹ See Core (1996).

The difficulty with this approach is to create an ethical procedure through which to compare or judge between these stories, hence to ground useful debates. Narratives in this narrow sense tend to underspecify causality, though Sayer (1989) sees this as a failure rather than a deliberate strategy to represent the inherent ambiguous, contextual and non-essential nature of power and meaning. To get at this subtlety, anthropologists become fixated with the minutiae of everyday life, the uniqueness of the rhythms that structure the reproduction of group culture. Too often in the past, the focus is in documenting the symbolic and material systems to uncover their (non-Western) logic and consciousness, rather than as dynamic and contested sites of exchange with other cultures. Essentially the problem here is that it becomes impossible to compare different ethnographic narratives, between times and places which may have quite common histories and practices.¹⁰

Recent anthropological texts such as Comaroff and Comaroff (1991) and Tsing (1993), have begun to break down these disciplinary and methodological boundaries. Through constructing both self-reflexive and explicitly political texts, they combine narrative and analytic tools to inscribe cultural political struggles. Writing is thus not an attempt to neutrally *represent* others, but a process of *learning* beyond the immediate research context. Often the major theme in this type of text is of the dynamic encounter between cultures, within which a series of tensions occur along race, gender, class or other social divisions. These new ethnographies combine multiple textual sources: oral histories, novels, diaries, advertising and previous “scientific” studies to demonstrate the

¹⁰ An example is an anecdote about an anthropology conference where the ethnographers studying upland and lowland New Guinea could find nothing to talk about because they

scattered discursive and material battlefields. It is repeatedly evident that the authors are quite adamant that the outcome is never to be seen to be inevitable. In the Comaroffs (1991) account of colonialism in South Africa, despite Britain's superior military and economic power, the forms of governance and the "colonization of consciousness" were always contested items. Understanding the cultural political history of this "embrace" is critical to determining the allocation of power to the emerging imperial/tribal order then, as it is to the potential for contemporary resistance to apartheid and to opportunities for democracy to the new government of national unity.

Tsing's (1993) study of the Meratus in the East Kalimantan in Indonesian Borneo is constructed around her conversations with a single local "leader," Uma Adong. Both "engaged in the same task of searching for their powerful history" (91). We read their stories of the politics of colonization, imperialism, capitalism, traditional kin relations and the ongoing struggle with the state over logging rights, the attempted imposition of order and the resultant history of violence. If Tsing feels she cannot intervene directly to help protect the Meratus land claims (xi), she instead chose to end with a story about abortion, reconfiguring a polarized debate in the West about rights, to remake the fetus as wise, not innocent. She offers a model of political agency, not of victims needing protection, whether fetuses or trees, but having the right to choose when and how they die. The object of such texts is to understand how discursive practices operate which link these fields, not to find the "essential truths" of each place.

were so caught up in the specificities of language and culture.

Case Studies in Appalachian militant particularism

In the following chapters I argue that a sense of place is critical to the formation of social movements in Appalachia. Here I review some of the organizations which appear throughout this study, in order to introduce the local histories which will provide the context of struggle. Out of each place, particular issues evolved to become salient to that community and the movement garnered together grassroots support, formulating and deploying theories and strategies of protest. A dominant theme in many of these communities that I examined is a linkage to the exploitation of coal. Tied to this is a pattern of relatively self-sufficient, often insular community networks, dependent on larger scale processes, practicing various cultures of survival, quiescence and sometimes violent opposition. This study attempts to highlight how these places and movements have responded to changing circumstances which necessitate new strategies at all scales, yet which refuse to part with a folk tradition of community as a basis for identity and action.

The majority of the case studies of militant particularism come from two anthologies. John Gaventa *et al's* (1990) *Communities in Economic Crisis* and Stephen Fisher's (1993) *Fighting Back in Appalachia*, are accounts of mostly successful social movements, emphasizing how problems of organizing were overcome through democratic grassroots strategies. Allen's (1993) piece is typical, showing the success of Save Our Cumberland Mountains (SOCM) in broadening its objective and adapting its internal structure. SOCM began in 1972 to protest strip mining in Tennessee. Coal companies were responsible for massive environmental degradation, destroying rural roads with coal trucks, transforming landscapes and silting up creeks, yet paid little or no

taxes. Allen describes how support came from a combination of its members history of action in the union and individual leaders, notably a local miner and deputy J W Bradley. Through its first period of organizing they used litigation, lobbying both locally and nationally for an end to strip mining. A retreat in 1979 marked a shift to community leadership and a broader range of issues to act as an incentive to new members and a more flexible approach. Kentuckians For the Commonwealth (KFTC) provides a similar model of a single-issue such as coal providing a site for mobilizing across a range of community affairs (Szakos 1990).

Two of the studies focus on single actions to demonstrate the transition to new strategies from the traditional UMW (United Mine-Workers) stance. Bingham (1993) relates the oral histories of eight women who staged a sit-in in Knott Co. Kentucky in January 1972 to oppose strip-mining which was causing subsidence and destroying their lives. Often land was stripped without the surface owners consent, a legacy of the old broad form deeds. Bingham describes a terrifying night, that was at once empowering, yet which made the power of the company more obvious in its ability to split a community, pitting jobs versus environment. The salience of such events in producing personal and collective memories of struggle is also made explicit in Sessions and Ansley's (1993) account of the takeover of Pittston's Moss 3, in 1989 at St. Paul, Virginia. Miners occupied the plant without resistance, bringing Pittstons local coal production to a standstill. This materialist act of seizure was made the site and signifier of a powerful experience during the seven days. Crowds grew outside the gates, people and the media coming from all over Appalachia and beyond, drawing on and producing

new memories of the relations between capital, the state, labor and community. Couto (1993) refers to these instances as “free spaces.”

One of the aims of cultural politics is to show that quiescence is not natural but is integral to the production of hegemony. Cable (1993) explains some of the mechanisms in Yellow Creek, Kentucky, which prevented the issue of tanning pollution even entering the public political sphere. Despite individual “fussin” there was no concerted community action until the YCCC (Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens) formed in 1980. What was responsible for this transformation to collective resistance? Changes at a number of scales opened up a “discursive space” within which a movement could voice opposition and lever outside support. Part of this aid came from Highlander, an organization established in 1932 in Tennessee which has evolved into a loose alliance, providing education and coordinating local efforts (Glen 1993). Highlander places particular emphasis on leadership training, enabling local actors to become experts both in specific issues and the problems inherent to grassroots organizing.

In rural Kentucky, the tobacco oligopoly has forced many small farmers off the land and sparked the search for alternative economically viable community life. The Community Farm Alliance (CFA) provides training, credit support and, most vitally, knowledge to transform agriculture from tobacco to a more diversified and viable structure. CFA believes that the dominant trend of large agribusiness is environmentally and socially destructive, so it lobbies at all scales for smaller, co-operative, farmer-owned and controlled development. Vital to this transformation is the establishment of non-monopoly markets for credit, purchasing inputs and selling produce, hence the necessity for regional and larger alliances (Hamilton 1990; Hamilton and Ryan 1993). Another

example of local alternative development is provided by Weller *et al* (1990) in Ivanhoe, Virginia. When the National Carbide plant closed, a group, mostly women, got together to see what could be done and devised an ambitious plan for local investment.

From the day-to-day problems of attracting capital I now move to consider how social theory has provided alternative explanations of capitalism and everyday life.

Chapter III

The spatial politics of difference

“Ideally, each study broadens or otherwise challenges the range of schema with which we make sense of the world.”

(Andrew Sayer)¹¹

“What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other.”

(Clifford Geertz)¹²

Geographers are increasingly dealing with the spatial implications of intense cultural and political conflicts. Authors such as Smith (1993) and Herod (1991a; 1991b) are particularly concerned about the importance of scale in the production and mediation of social conflict. Much of this literature tries to go beyond Marxism into poststructural theories of power. Marx placed the central social division between capital and labor in their historical struggle for control of surplus value, a rift historically mediated by both the unions and the state. Changing fortunes have radically diminished the power of unions in most Western nations, whilst new concerns, primarily focused on the need for a broader defined social justice and a pleasant and safe physical environment, gave rise to a wave of new social movements in the 1960s. Much of poststructuralist social theory whilst concerned with promoting a more dynamic

¹¹Andrew Sayer (1989), *The “new” regional geography and problems of narrative*, page 261.)

¹²Clifford Geertz (1973), *The Interpretation of Cultures*, page 29

conceptualization of society, which encompasses structure and agency, has not fully incorporated the role of social movements in changing relations of power and practice.

This chapter evaluates various strands of social and cultural theory to produce a framework for investigating uneven relations of power. These strands include feminist thought, including the strategies of women's social movements as well as geographic concepts of scale and local dependence. In the history of social science there is a tension between explanations emphasizing either structure or agency. Each of the authors below explicitly avoids these excesses of determinism and voluntarism where power exists autonomously from social relations. Instead, power is constituted through the spatial practices of everyday life. Thus people's thoughts and actions provide the context within and upon which capitalism, patriarchy, the state and individuals can act. It is the mediation between these interests which underlie these poststructural approaches, and that will inform this thesis on social movements in Appalachia. Places are produced, reproduced and transformed through social interactions, changing both the physical and social landscape as material and symbolic constructs.

The first section below begins with Bordieu (1977) who uses the term *habitus* to describe the semi-stable set of cultural theories and practices which peoples have to center their lives. I then extend how habitus conceives of time and space using texts by Smith (1990) and Harvey (1985) who use and extend Lefebvre's (1991) work on the production of space. First, they articulate how capitalism produces space in its highly mobile and expansive search for profit, transforming resources through the processes of competition and cooperation. More recently their analyses have privileged the cultural mediation of power, using places of intense social conflict to demonstrate how scale is fundamental to the outcome. Next, feminist and postcolonial writers such as Mohanty (1991) provide examples of locating *cultural politics*,

emphasizing the histories of identity and conflict between groups. Subsequently, alliances may be negotiated, common causes found and new forms of political strategy begun, building on this memory. The thorny debate over the importance and uniqueness of place to explaining geographical difference is approached through Cox and Mair's work (1988; 1991) and Herod's (1991b) study of local dependence in West Virginia. It is argued that only through a knowledge of social actors in their local context can collective protests effectively strategize. Finally, the concept of geographical scale will highlight the dilemma for cultural politics of choosing between parochial and universal interests which has shattered many emergent militant particularisms (Harvey, 1995).

Structure, agency and habitus

A conceptual framework for critically examining the power relations between capital, the state and individual communities, typically concentrates on the processes of exploitation and control. Capital may be the dominant force, but it cannot operate in an absolute fashion, resulting in processes of uneven development and contextual differences. Traditionally, theories of society have tended to stress either structure or agency, with humans either embedded in multiple, tightly woven constraints of power (Marxism and structuralism), or at the center of their own creativity and sense of meaning (Humanism). A number of poststructural theories in social science have sought to overcome this dualism, in geography through structuration and realism (Cloke *et al* 1991). Social movements provide a good example of structure and agency working dialectically to achieve material and symbolic goals. This search for a middle ground has variously centered on concepts of place, locality, and everyday life, but is perhaps most explicitly illustrated through Bordieu's (1977) exploration of *Habitus*. His concept of "theory

and practice” usefully articulates both the mechanisms for cultural continuity and dynamic struggle.

Theoretical differences between structure and agency-based approaches in geography were largely forged in the anti-positivist debate of the early 1970s. Marxist and other radical geographers pointed to the neutral stance of spatial science which assumed fair, unbiased market-based economy, in which competition produced measurable spatial regularities. Authors including Harvey (1973), argued that capitalism was determining the location of production and profit counter to the bourgeois ideology of equal opportunity. Social injustice was thus not just an unfortunate by-product of capitalist development, but a tool necessary to creating a social surplus.

Alternatively, a broadly humanist critique did not directly challenge the structures of capitalism, for they saw structuralist theory as being as inherently alienating of human nature as the system it sought to expose. Humanist writing stresses that emancipatory forms of knowledge must begin with individuals and our inherent creativity, uniqueness and search for meaning. Ley and Cybrinski (1974) and others thus constructed representations of space centered on symbols and daily activities of individuals, acting as part of larger groups. Only through understanding how these (mostly unique) perceptions and expressions came to be, could we fully comprehend the human lifeworld.

Debate between these approaches evolved and became somewhat integrated into the structuration and realist camps by the mid 1980s. Essentially, the object was to demonstrate that social relations are inherently spatial, coming together in specific places; contexts which can only

be understood through structures which are external, such as capitalism or patriarchy.¹³ Reviewing both theoretically and empirically oriented pieces from the structuration literature, Cloke et al, (1991) successfully showed that “structural properties of social systems can be both a medium and outcome of spatial practices”. Although placing equal ontological status to structure and agency in a duality,¹⁴ people tended to be reduced as agents to objects, rather than subjective participants in a discourse. Dehumanizing the subject within geography was partially a result of choices in narrative style. Authors preferred meta-narratives of explanation, such as regional transformation as a context for capitalism, over perspectives of empowerment such as feminism.

Before turning to see how habitus can begin to resolve these tensions, it is constructive to review the language of structuration within geography. At its core are Marxist concepts, and the centrality of the capitalist mode of production within any explanation of modern life (Thrift, 1983). At the root of capitalism there lies the primary conflict in social relations between capital and labor and the inevitable production of class. Ideas of cultural hegemony from Gramsci and Williams still locate domination in class conflict (*ibid.*). Geographies using structuration look at divisions along other social axes, but tend to focus on gender, specifically the interplay between home and work, its implications for the division of labor and related forms of domination (Pratt 1993). Often seen as more marginal to explanation, more as the “context of culture for social change” are changes in (local) knowledge. Authors including Thrift however stress the importance of language to articulating social reproduction, how social institutions of the family and community communicate and make sense of the world.

¹³ See the edited volume by Gregory and Urry (1985) for one of the “definitive” collections of socio-spatial theories.

¹⁴ where a dualism prioritizes one concept over the other (Gregson, 1986, 185).

Despite the general acceptance of Thrift's heavily cited manifesto (1983) on the role of space and place, its implementation within geography remains largely ad hoc. Paasi (1991) goes further than most, focusing on how regions become institutionalized through a variety of mechanisms, such as economic production, symbolic resurrection of "tradition" the media, education, and bureaucracy, as they pertain to Finland. Though more convincing theoretically than empirically, he does show how places are constructed through individual experience and biography,¹⁵ and later hints at the permeability of scale (250). Structuration geographies, though a useful step in creating a better model of social relations were and continue to be tied to a highly functional and sterile scientific language. It is because of this failure to capture the subtlety found in cultural theory that I now turn to Pierre Bordieu.

Bordieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) uses the concept of *habitus* to challenge existing anthropological and sociological theory. In part, he seeks to prevent his text being merely a hermeneutic representation of practice, which sees all practice as spectacle. Rather he sees the interplay between material and symbolic forms of culture as productive, not passively mirroring reality. *Cultural strategy* refers to how individuals manipulate relations with their environments and each other, yet within structural limits and expectations. Cultures of the body, landscapes, seasons, home, are formed through "generative schemes" creating links of similarity between objects and differentiating them from others, especially the distinction of male and female spaces. Individuals have practical mastery over these schemes, yet also a learned ignorance of unknown places. No one has monopoly of physical or symbolic violence but are

¹⁵ This construction of place is more generally and less subtly created through the use of time-geography, showing the physical intersection of human life-paths, over many scales of time and space.

each masters of distinct spheres of daily and ritual life.¹⁶ Ideologies of native theories and discourses exist as practical relationships. For example, marriage is played as a game to manipulate material and symbolic capital, so that history and personal possessions are constantly negotiated, and over the long term the group works to reproduce and integrate itself.

Bourdieu is seeking to create what he terms a “theory of the mode of generation of practices” utilizing

habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions...as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them (72).

It is from a shared commonality of experience, action and communication that a habitus achieves its objective version of reality. From this mutual understanding comes a certain quasi-stable harmony, so “the habitus, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history” (82). It is through the extension of these methodologies that we can gain perspectives at broader scales of time and space, a project often identified with Henri Lefebvre, the subject of the next section.

¹⁶ Bourdieu’s study focuses on “traditional” societies, specifically in Kabylia, Algeria. Presumably he would see the need to translate this assertion for “modern” societies.

The social production of time and space

Fundamental to writing on the production of time and space is the dialectic between difference and homogeneity. It is from these conflicting social forces that space can be understood in all of its guises as produced, reproduced and (occasionally) transformed. I will draw principally on the work of Lefebvre (1991), Smith (1990) and Harvey (1985, 1987), to move towards a language of space that captures both its structured coherence and radically unstable natures. Smith and Harvey's work essentially interpretes and extends that of Lefebvre's. They develop theories of capitalist uneven development and urbanization respectively, which existed implicitly in a nascent form within the *Production of Space*.

One similarity shared by the authors is their use of Marxist epistemology and methodology, making the capitalist production of class central to explanation. Lefebvre also begins a theoretical project to describe a number of other non-capitalist spaces that co-exist with those of capital and within which society and space interact. Critical to his project is an effort to conceive of alternative spaces to capitalist abstract space, which currently dominates Western thought and practice. Lefebvre demonstrates that abstract (capitalist) space was produced both materially and symbolically from an absolute, pre-historic space through everyday practices. Capital has been dramatically effective in transforming previous discursive regimes such as the European feudal system, into a thoroughly modern space of industrial production and class antagonism. Yet the internal conflicts that survive capital's history of domination and so pervade social space, can also be used to articulate a differential (socialist) space.

Historical materialism and semiotics show the development of a division between absolute and social space. Absolute space is that of nature before it becomes entangled in human representations of it, thus he can only point to a mythical past landscape of caves and rocks

(Lefebvre, 1991, 48). From absolute space a relational and social space is produced, though its symbolic and material practices still contain memories and references to the physical environment. With the rise of capitalism and abstract space came more penetrating systems of political control, founded on the domination of the country by the city. Labor and nature became increasingly alienated and abstracted (49). Lefebvre claims that this formal, objectifying and violent hegemony exerts unprecedented control over both the public and private spaces of everyday life.

The transformation of space can best be told through the use of Lefebvre's conceptual triad (1991, 33), later extended by Harvey (1987, 266). Firstly, *spatial practice* describes the routine actions and experiences that structure individual lives. Such repetitive actions are essential to the coherence of production and reproduction, including the private/public division of urban space with its struggle for control of land, profit and labor. Women's labor in the home which structures domestic and workplace spaces is part of this system, though not of Harvey's schema. Secondly, *representations of space* simultaneously structure our perception of the world. Through a series of dominant discourses, such as nationalism, ideologies are manipulated to reproduce a structured set of relationships in order to reinforce a specific mode of production. In the West these tend to be verbal representations: academic, popular and political, though they can be visual. *Representational spaces* are the third type, being mostly coherent and extensive, expressing complex symbolizations of human activity. Often communicated through non-verbal means, they include spectacles, art and popular protest, where they can effectively produce a collective, popular consciousness.

Smith (1990) traces this "uneven development" of space through the geographic expansion of capitalism. He sees that capital faces a fundamentally spatial problematic. On the one hand is

the need to immobilize itself in the landscape through investment to produce a profit, versus its other desire to roam elsewhere in the search for (potentially) higher profitability. Capital's underlying tension between its contradictory need for low wages and maintaining markets, leads to tendencies of simultaneous geographic differentiation and equalization. A spatial dynamic is produced as certain "regions" accumulate capital, whilst others undergo violent devaluation, the process and form of *uneven development*. Smith's thesis is that the dynamic stability of the system is resolved through the production of scales, each of which exhibit certain processes and tendencies of development or forms of "structured coherence" (Harvey 1985). These stabilities arise from alliances between capital and the state, though they may include other communities such as labor. Though this classification of scales into global, national, regional and urban, is overly simplistic, treating only economic tendencies, vastly underplaying the fragmented nature and experience of scale, Smith and Harvey address these weaknesses in later works (see below).

Harvey's work is centered on the urban experience, as the product of capitalism operating across local to global scales. Principally this involves uncovering the political-economic processes behind contemporary (postmodern) experience (1989). Flexible accumulation, the latest form of capital restructuring, is able to heighten and intensify the speed with which space-time relations act, producing spaces of apparently conflicting meaning. Places such as the sites of urban spectacles ultimately enable capital to reproduce itself and to dominate culture, albeit in ever-changing forms (1987). Dominant classes are better placed to mobilize symbolic capital, particularly through spectacle, whilst subordinate groups too easily get entangled in fragmented realities, fighting each other instead of capital. On a theoretical level is his attempt to outline how social struggles seek to define the meanings of space and time:

each social formation constructs objective conceptions of space and time sufficient unto its own needs and purposed of material and social reproduction and organized its material practices in accordance with those conceptions (Harvey, 1990, 419).

Examples of gentrification in Paris and Baltimore show how:

We see the struggle for command over strategic central city spaces as part of a broader struggle to replace a landscape of hierarchy and of pure monetary power with a social space constructed in the image of equality and justice (*ibid.*, 422).

In a highly dynamic environment such as Houston or Los Angeles, time-space compression results in a confusion of forms, even chaos, alongside the emergence of conservative efforts to promote localism, regionalism and nationalism. Harvey later extends his analysis to trace the production of green discourses and conflicts between and within different political alliances (Harvey 1993a).¹⁷ His earlier work excluded the actions of social movements including labor, an omission that enforced the image of capitalism as invincible (cf. Gibson-Graham 1996 for this critique). By extending the agenda of social theory from analysis to social action, we move into the realm of cultural politics as a framework for investigating social conflict and collective practices.

Cultural politics

Following from a general conceptualization of the way certain forces produce society and space, this section focuses on poststructural theories of politics, based not just on traditional

¹⁷ Ideas presented at Duke University at a conference entitled “Globalization and Culture,” 1994.

divisions of class but taking the issue of cultural difference seriously. Although a number of literatures utilize a cultural political framework, feminist scholarship provides one of the most wide-ranging and incisive discourses, combining historical and contemporary examples. Developing from an analysis of how gender is used materially and symbolically to marginalize women to an agenda for cultural politics, authors such as Mohanty (1991) extend theoretical and practical knowledge to include issues of race and the colonial production of place. These “peripheral” histories demonstrate the necessity of understanding how specific power relations are produced amidst dominant cultural constructions, and provide a means to counter current hegemonic ideologies and practices.

Feminist critiques of Western life and politics argue that a variety of mechanisms create social injustice. Those who hold power within this system tend to be white, male, heterosexuals, and benefit from inclusion in this construction of sameness (Rose, 1993). Those whose identity differs, those who are non-white, female, and/or homosexual, are marginalized through exclusion from power as Others. Social differences can be “measured” in a number of ways: African-Americans and women are on average paid less for the same work as whites and men, black females the least. Further investigation reveals how these differentials originated and more importantly became reproduced through time and across space. Examples of the intersection of patriarchal, racial and capitalist structures may be seen in studies of job segregation in time and space, which operate through mechanisms of demand and supply networks in local labor markets (see Hanson 1992 on Worcester). More theoretically sophisticated analyses look to link home and work through the establishment of discourses and sites of power. Pratt (1993) uses the same project in Worcester to conceptualize the family as both a resource and a site of exploitative patriarchal gender relations. Within the family, power is fragmented, composed of often

opposing mechanisms of control, resulting in unique experiences inside what appear to be similar contexts.

Difference is thus not an essential but a socially constructed quality and category, though it often utilizes essentialist language to justify and “naturalize” inequality. Women are often identified with, even as, nature, an association that makes the female sphere the domestic one, analogous with child-care and “motherhood.” This complex and enduring ideology is used to separate and maintain the distinctions between public and private, differences which are used by both capital and the state to advance a set of values and institutions which maintain male privilege.

Mohanty (1991) summarizes how feminist analysis has moved to include multiple axes of oppression other than gender, though never as independent from sexism. As with earlier feminist praxis, Mohanty’s first task is the recovery of marginalized histories, to incorporate the experiences and memories of individuals and collective groups. Telling these stories help to displace hegemonic narratives of the Third World imagined as a place of overpopulation, illiteracy, religious fundamentalism. They are replaced with examples of how population policy, sexuality and colonialism have been encountered, resisted and re-shaped. As with Bordieu’s habitus, cultural strategies are understood to be shaped by many processes coming together, including movements celebrating nationalism, sisterhood and blackness.

The critical moment for Mohanty is to move from purely “cultural strategies” of identity formation towards more explicitly “political” locations and actions, that are rooted in past, present and future struggles. In order to create these “cartographies of struggle” that do not deny difference amongst the participants in a movement, it is also critical to abandon an “us versus them” strategy. Seeing each side as a perfectly unified whole ignores the contradictory locations

of members--we are never simply oppressors or the oppressed. Glossing over differences may later split the effort apart. What often identifies those instances of successful militant particularism is their ability to form broad alliances, based on negotiated collective group interests.

An example from Mohanty of cultural politics in action is the history of feminism in India. Women organized within a context which had been produced through years of colonial and neo-colonial British influence, upon an indigenous caste system. Multiple hierarchies are being constantly reworked, primarily through the actions of the state and the family. For example, changes to landownership rights and the formalization of family law (sanskritization) have diminished women's power in India to the benefit of village male elders. When women began to enter public life under the "democratizing" process, it occurred within rigid middle class definitions of womanhood, where women's agency is highly circumscribed. This kind of legacy is essential to understanding contemporary strategies of Indian feminists, who must carefully negotiate boundaries around the intersection of patriarchy, capitalism, communitarianism and nationalism.

In conclusion, Mohanty argues for a diverse set of oppositional strategies based on a foregrounding of consciousness, identity and writing. Central to her method is the collection of life-stories: oral/collective histories that articulate individual and shared knowledge. These shared memories of survival and struggle form the basis of shared identities, of subjects who know the world and their place in it. From this understanding they can begin to develop a political consciousness, re-defining the context of struggle, a praxis which simultaneously challenges dominant knowledge as it encodes resistance into a memory for future action. Only

through this radical process of forging allegiances and alliances through negotiating between locations and across barriers of caste and nation, can a more progressive politics be made.

Local dependence

Constructions of place in geography continue to provide a source of contention and extreme difference in approach. Humanistic studies of the early 1970s began the resurrection of place as a critical concept (Ley and Cybrinski 1974), issues later reworked in a more structural manner as the “locality studies” of the 1980s (Cox and Mair 1991). More recently, Harvey has returned to his earlier concerns with the production of places “because territorial place-based identity is one of the most pervasive bases for both progressive political mobilization and reactionary politics” (1993b, 4). It is this tension between viewing place as inherently conservative, serving the powerful rather than as a valuable, meaningful resource that paralyzed the localities debate. Place should instead be conceived as simultaneously both bounded and permeable, coherent, yet dynamic.

Much of the debate over place has centered on claims for the uniqueness of local cultures against contingent instances in a world that is becoming more homogenous. In contrast, Cox and Mair (1988; 1991) and Herod (1991b) use the history of local political practice to establish differences where place is an active agent in transforming structures. Overall, they show how social struggles are locally dependent, though their effect is to collapse culture into political practice, with the subsequent loss of the complexity of local relations, especially tensions not generally articulated in public by local actors. Places, or *sites* in feminist terminology, are used to show the intersection of multiple processes from which these particular political alliances emerge.

Local dependence is the necessity which actors have to behave within and take account of local context. All actors are to some degree spatially immobile in their choices and resources, which tends to produce a structured coherence in their activities (Harvey, 1985). Herod (1991b) links the effects of scale and local dependence to the conflict surrounding the closing of a manufacturing plant in West Virginia. The firm, a local political elite and “the community” are each heavily invested in place, yet the negotiations over closure move into far wider spaces. Capital may be able to shift between locations but ultimately it must invest in plant, train labor and bring together raw materials to be productive. “[C]apital investments in such things as power lines, mortgages, property development and their business links, perhaps built up over many years, to certain localized component suppliers, service providers and loyal customers make them dependent on continued local economic vitality” (Herod 1991b, 387 after Cox and Mair 1988).

In the case of Appalachia, companies are dependent upon supplies of timber, coal, labor and consumer markets, each of which can only be exploited in certain locations. Harvey (1993b) argues that place has become more rather than less important for capital, with radical restructuring of urban areas redefining each’s relative location in the global scheme of accumulation. With finance capital ever freer from local restraints, it can exploit smaller differences between localities, from labor-market relations to cultural histories, the process of the selling of place.

The local state is also tied to its local context through its capital investment in public infrastructure, such as schools. Local politics are increasingly defined by revolutions against taxation, a problem exacerbated by reductions in federal grants and the need to legitimate its actions to voters. Local government centered growth coalitions (Cox and Mair 1991) are

especially keen to highlight their uniqueness in comparison to others, yet are obviously limited by local conditions, so simultaneously they must try to escape local dependence by attracting federal funds. It is in this process of trying to escape the contradictions of the local, including labor militancy, poor physical and social infrastructure, that they form these coalitions, a matter which will be addressed below.

Communities are similarly embedded by local dependence through a combination of material and spiritual resources that are most commonly provided locally, from work to identity. Some of the problems of community constructions of place are discussed by Rose (1993). Humanistic narratives, though helping to explicate the complex web of perception, experience and imagination which fixes people to place, tend to prevent alternative readings and analyses of power relations. Rose claims that in establishing their own sensitivity to a mysterious other world as truth, geographers ignore the home and community as sites of internal struggle, especially women's oppression. Place is instead idealized through stereotypes of femininity. Only those meanings which are anchored in the physical landscape are included, promoting an aesthetic knowledge, itself imbued with an ideology of passivity. Much of this work focuses on the authenticity of dwelling, a unity, now undermined through economic transformation. For social movements, places can provide essential networks of support and mobilization to channel knowledge and action. However, many find it difficult to avoid these exclusions of certain groups found in most communities.

Social movements must not only move to change local social relations and the distribution of power, but in order to do so they need to comprehend and incorporate different scales of spatial knowledge and practice. Concepts of geographical scale can show how the local, regional, national and global act as processes and spaces can interact. Scales thus can help to

create a more critical and progressive concept of place to the exclusions inherent to community and outlined above.

Scale

Social processes and practice are thus substantially shaped by their local dependence, providing limits and resources to those groups invested in specific times and spaces. Geographical scale is used by Smith (1990) and Herod (1991a and b) to describe how social production, reproduction and transformation are not abstract processes roaming across time and space. Instead, processes are organized by and act through scales or hierarchies of semi-autonomous spheres. Smith's original work (1990 [1st ed. 1984]), traces how capitalist tendencies of cooperation and competition, equalization and differentiation are dynamically resolved through the production of geographical scale. Smith's later pieces and Herod's more empirically-informed work, have added other social agents and groups to capital, principally organized labor, highlighting how political struggles take place in a habitus. This more complex, contextual analysis includes the contestation over scales of ideology, such as nationalism or body politics.

Smith (1990) argues that space is hierarchically organized into distinct scales of activity. Three scales are produced uniquely by capitalism--the urban, global and the nation-state, each of which fulfills essential requirements of the overall system. As such, each scale represents part of the mosaic of "spatial fixes" needed to overcome the contradictions of capital. A historical-materialist account is used by Smith to define how surplus extraction, exchange and alienation of nature and labor are necessary to this process, as well as underlie the production of contemporary spaces, including the construction of class. Fundamental to creating profits is the need to

immobilize capital in the landscape, yet at the same time to differentiate between places to produce a spatial division of labor (Massey 1984). Capital has increasingly shown a tendency towards mobility across time and space through its control of scale (Harvey, 1985) hence the competition between localities to attract investment (see above).

Scale is not however, simply an analytical tool but is a contested domain of material, social and subject relations in space and time:

The construction of geographical scale is a primary means through which spatial differentiation ‘takes place.’ Second, that an investigation of geographical scale might provide us with a more plausible language of spatial difference. Third, that the construction of scale is a social process, i.e., scale is produced in and through societal activity which, in turn, produces and is produced by geographical structures of social interaction. Fourth, ... the production of geographical scale is the site of potentially intense political struggle (Smith, 1993, 97).

Herod (1991b) uses this concept of geographical scale to express the various identities and relative political positions of groups that consolidated following industrial restructuring and a plant closure in Clarksburg, West Virginia. The local community there was highly dependent on the remaining 9,500 jobs in the glass factory in 1986. They feared this work being moved elsewhere, a fear that was constructed by the management with the support of the union as a competition between places for investment. The organized labor thus took an unusual, “contra-class” position and moved to ally themselves with the city government and local business community in an attempt to avoid direct confrontation and negotiate a compromise--the survival of the plant. Their fear was of losing the plant altogether if workers became militant, hence their

“Faustian pact.” Capital in this case was portrayed locally as highly mobile. The plant had recently been acquired in a takeover, placing it within an ever larger corporate structure, where it had to compete on unfair terms and scales, becoming less locally dependent. The final actor in the case was the figure of Governor Arch Moore, usually a friend towards big business. Re-election politics shifted his alliance to fight against the closure, so representing himself as “local” advocate versus the outsiders of global capitalism. Each actor/group thus uses particular scales from which to engage the others, as ideological and practical power.

As Smith expresses it:

not only is the fragility and transitoriness of contemporary social relations expressed in space; the production of space is increasingly the means by which spatial difference is constructed and reconstructed (Smith 1992, 64).

The difficulty thus lies in how to interpret individual events, when “systematically different processes are involved in the arbitration and construction of different scales of social activity” (*ibid.*, 73). What is striking about both Smith’s and Herod’s work is its privileging of articulated social conflict, struggles that are publicly visible, whether homeless battles in New York’s Thomkin’s Square Park (Smith 1993) or the appropriation of “black” as a political identity by British Asians to fight racism. Absent, however, are (ethnographic) accounts of everyday resistance, especially those studied by feminists. This omission is curious for both authors do address feminist theoretical claims, such as fear of violence inside and outside the home. Gendered differences are thus marginalized to the scale of the body upon which fear is inscribed, passive bodies, not as agents capable of any self expression. These missing scales of the

household and the body are also absent from many of the case studies in Appalachia (see study by Oberhauser 1995).

Other than the need for social theory to include all scales of narrative and analysis within its boundaries, some additional considerations must be made more explicit. From the discussion of the localities debate above, scales are too often fixed and defined, in that case through the rigid boundaries of the local labor market. As such, scales are usually delimited by material characteristics, which makes it easier to create static objects. Neither spatial practices nor their representations are immobile, and it is attempts to capture this fluidity of experience, perception and imagination which makes the work of Lefebvre and others so appealing. The task for geography is to link processes engendered by capital, the media, and the state as they influence each other, in order to show how different scales are produced. Only if conflict and struggle are integrated to show that change is possible, both as publicly articulated and as discontinuous everyday discourse, will a politics sensitive to spatial difference emerge.

This chapter forms the basis of a conceptual language of cultural politics, a set of tools appropriate to understanding social movements in Appalachia. Basic to this approach is the dialectic between structure and agency, to see humans working not as individuals, but subject to constraints and regulations, which are in a constant process of being upheld or challenged. It is these cultural strategies that form the basis for the sort of social scientific method used here to investigate Appalachian social movements. What are the kinds of durable and flexible habitus that they operate within? One of the most significant factors is the role of memory, the sense of shared history that positions people within a personal and politicized context. The next chapter helps to give a rough guide to this history through a brief summary of its regional transformation.

Issues of local dependence and scale help to frame the narrative, to show that social struggle is not the random appearance of militant particularisms, for these outbursts of protest are systematically linked. Though I use this conceptual framework at a fairly abstract level, it provides a context for the contemporary organizing focused on in chapter five.

Chapter IV

The coal-class regime and regional transformation in Appalachia

*“and I watched the flat cars take our timber,
I watched the coal-cars steal our rock,
...that old brick building still stands like a cenotaph
to a vision lost and buried in a very different past.”*

(Cowboy Junkies, *The Last Spike*, from “Black-Eyed Man.”)

Building upon the abstract theory of power developed in chapter three, this one begins the story of local and regional histories of collective organizing in Appalachia, centered around the labor movement. To understand contemporary militant particularisms and regional alliances, one must first know something of Appalachia’s history of underdevelopment, one that owes much to the production of coal, a systemic exploitation opposed by a legacy of resistance in the form of the United Mineworkers of America (UMW). I argue that the spatial practices and representations of new social movements (chapter five) can make sense to participants and observers only through a context of previous struggles for knowledge and power.

One such arena of struggle is the production of academic narratives, which claim to explain the patterns and processes of poverty in the region. Though each provides interesting and sometimes useful material, on the whole each tradition tends to over-simplify culture, rendering it static, blaming people for their own exploitation or incapable of doing anything about it. The first four sections of this chapter review the major approaches in popular and academic discourses to understanding the region, providing a critical account of their strengths and weaknesses.

The remainder of the chapter presents an alternative account, a “new regional geography” of Appalachia, concentrating on the highly uneven nature of development (Smith 1990, Escobar 1995). Principal players include: the role of capital, the state (local, state and federal governments) and communities as centers of power for the geographical regulation of space and time up to the 1970s. I argue that around this time, a crisis of legitimacy occurred in this regional hegemony, triggered by a combination of internal and external processes, exposing the inequities to greater public scrutiny. These forces are principally industrial restructuring and actions by social movements. A “gap” in the hegemonic formation thus opened a new space for communities to organize, the subject of the next chapter.

Much that is written about Appalachia and its position in the US as an underdeveloped region, is part of and actively reinforces the dominant mode of knowledge about it as backward and poor. Before proceeding with an alternative narrative, one that represents a full and diverse culture of adaptive strategies for resistance and survival, I will review four of these mainstream approaches. Each in turn attempts to explain the extremely tenacious pattern of poverty in Appalachia, by comparing certain characteristics of the land, people and economy with “main-street” America, setting up a social norm and disfunctional other. Against this, a new regional geography provides a narrative-analysis of regional poverty, providing empirical evidence of the abstract concepts outlined in chapter three. Geographical difference, the salience of long-term transformation and people’s individual and collective agency are established through an insistence on historical memory, including organized protest. Unlike the mainstream approaches, exploitation is not taken passively as inevitable or unchanging, for indeed by the 1970s the existing regime had begun to falter. Many of the groups discussed in the following chapter locate their roots in this period of intense transformation in the economy and culture of

Appalachia, a crisis caused as much by external as internal challenges. Thus the chapter progresses from a brief summary and critique of ways of thinking that actively exclude the possibility of self-motivated action, to a description and theorization of the opening up of this very sort of emancipatory space.

Traditional regional geography

Most of the geographical literature on Appalachia is in the form of traditional regional descriptions, a mode of scholarship that seeks to define a bounded territory on the basis of common, underlying or essential themes; in this case it is typified as a place of disfunctional isolation and intractable poverty. Appalachia's borders are alternately delimited by either the physical topography as mountainous, distinct from the flat land surrounding it (Raitz and Ulack 1984), or by the boundary of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). The ARC was founded in 1965 as part of Lyndon Johnson's "War on poverty" to tackle an area that was perceived as being somehow resistant to progress. It is the closed, taken for granted nature of the causal link between physical and human "problems" that function as a normative in discussions of the region (Birdsall and Florin 1991), reinforced by arbitrary political boundaries.

Traditional approaches first locate the boundaries, usually defining a core of West Virginia, South-Eastern Virginia, Eastern Kentucky and Eastern Tennessee, with similar but weaker characteristics in the adjacent periphery. There follows a description of the consecutive periods or cycles of settlement and associated economic activity, each linked to a limited period of development and growth. Settlement patterns tend to be small, self-contained towns, strung out along the valleys of rivers and creeks, many of them coal camps. Camps were mostly located in hollows where the coal seams reached the surface where shafts could be sunk directly in.

Development is taken as the improvement in communications: roads, railroads and telecommunication, and the relative improvements in wages and job opportunities that come from each cycle.

This boom-bust cycle, based principally on coal production, is particularly important in creating waves of migration in and outwards. For example, East Europeans, Italians and Southern blacks immigrated in the boom years of the 1920s. The downturn of the post-war period has left many coal counties relatively sparse. McDowell county has felt the ups and downs of the development cycle more than most. From a population of just 19,000 in 1900, it grew rapidly to almost 100,00 in 1950, yet since its peak two-thirds of its residents have left. In each downturn, it was mostly the recent immigrants who headed on to surrounding cities such as Cincinnati.

It is then common practice to use a series of maps and statistics to aid in the description of the whole and make a comparison to the rest of the US. A number of indicators may be used to describe poverty. For instance West Virginia ranks second in unemployment, and forty-ninth in median household income, ahead of only Mississippi. Authors such as Birdsall and Florin (1991) make some weak explanatory claims, for example they produce a map of coal overlaid by areas of poverty, whose ranges only overlap approximately. Further, they do not explore why it is that certain people are poor, others rich in these places, or why poverty exists where no coal is mined, or why there is even a link assumed between the two. Nor do they explain why West Virginia ranks 49th for high school graduates advancing to college. All that is offered are some vague statements such as “coal mining can be very disruptive.” This is presumably some indication of the long-term destruction of the landscape by deep and strip-mining methods,

pollution of the water-table and waterways, and the health effects of black lung disease on individuals, their families and communities.

Put simply, traditional approaches omit the major actors of cultural political analysis, ignoring the actions of the state, capitalists and communities in these landscapes. The next approach discussed below attempts to grapple with one major problem, the issue of culture as the key to patterns of poverty, in order to counter the rational and bland one given here.

A culture of poverty

Going beyond the objective facts of a region, a “culture of poverty” model attempts to explain why places remain persistently poor. This is very much guided by the position of the researcher as an outsider, who first judges the situation as a problem by its social manifestations. The second stage of this method of research is to attribute the problem to various characteristics of those experiencing the problem, blaming the victims for their situation, rather than some power structures inside the group or between it and wider social relations.

An example of this method is Weller (1965), describing Appalachia in *The Mountaineer in His Society* as the product of various social institutional practices. Particular emphasis is laid on the family as the key to the reproduction of values that promote poverty; practices and ideologies which are passed on through generations. In common with much of the racist literature on the black inner city underclass, people are portrayed by Weller as passive, helpless individuals, unwilling to change their situation other than through a violent and self-defeating pathology:

Thus mountain isolation, which began as physical isolation enforced by rugged topography, became mental and cultural isolation, holding people in disadvantaged areas, resisting those changes that would bring them into contact

with the outside world. The effect of conditions thus becomes a new cause of conditions, but the cause is now an attitude, not a mountain” (Weller 1965)

Weller claims that the families he saw were poorly planned, with no contemplation of their future. The traditional importance that mountaineers place on their children is here judged to be a mistaken goal, spreading scarce resources still thinner. Another supposed failure of social reproduction is the improper socialization of kin, “the boys becoming wild, the girls marrying too early.”

Implicit to a culture of poverty thesis, is the comparison of improper social characteristics compared to the American norm. Appalachians are thus labeled deviants to a middle class ideal of family lifestyle and values. A Western, suburban modern harmony is being contrasted with the rural, backward looking and dysfunctional family. Other than the hypocrisy of not identifying the actual and symbolic violence which produces the bourgeois family through capitalism and patriarchy, treating any group as internally homogenous is conceptually and practically a big problem. Differentiation exists within the smallest community, beginning at a macro-class level between owner and worker. Powerful social divisions within and between all scales are thus ignored.

Dependency theory

Dependency theory was developed by writers including Lenin to expand Marxist explanations of capitalism to include the particular practices of colonial and neo-colonial exploitation in the third-world. In Appalachia, Dix (1973) and Wells (1976) translate this analysis to examine an “internal colony” or semi-periphery within the US, thus creating a rather different representation of poverty to those outlined above. Appalachia’s structural dependence

upon primary resources (timber, coal, natural gas, agriculture) in addition to a handful of mostly polluting heavy industrial products, creates a dangerously lop-sided economy, sensitive to fluxes in national and global demand. Integral to neo-colonial social relations is the role that the state and the elite establishment (often linked) play in controlling development decisions.

In central Appalachia (60 of the 312 Appalachian Regional Commission's (ARC) counties) in the early 1970s, half of all large firms (over 50 employees) were coal mines. Life in the towns was harsh. Many of the settlements were coal camps of the type depicted in John Salyes' (1987) motion-picture "Matewan." Physical isolation was used by the companies to compound extreme class exploitation by preventing organizers even entering the hollows, renting homes only to active miners and paying them in scrip, thus forcing them to buy goods through the company store. Any dissenters were threatened by a private security force, basically hired thugs. As the mines became mechanized after the second world war, the number of coal miners in West Virginia fell from 131,700 (1945) to 45,000 (1968), leading to massive emigration, primarily to large cities in Ohio. One of the main structural weaknesses of Appalachia's economy is absentee ownership, amounting to 66% of West Virginia's private taxable property.¹⁸ Massive capital outflow results from the corporate nature of the coal-chemical industrial complex, which is now West Virginia's largest dollar value industry, further draining capital and control outside of the region (Dix, 1973).

Integral to exploitative socio-economic relations in this neo-colonial context, are the actions of local political elites. West Virginia's political dependence is well documented by Rod Harless

¹⁸ Figures from Appalachian Land Ownership Taskforce (1983). "Private land" includes all that not owned by various scales of government, including the Monongehela National Forest that covers a large portion of western West Virginia. Surface ownership does not always match ownership of coal or gas seams below ground, hence some "space" will have multiple title deeds.

(1973). Corruption is not confined to overt acts by the most powerful individuals, such as the notorious stories of embezzlement and favoritism by ex-governor Arch Moore. Rather, the problem lies in the detailed and insidious control of power by individuals in government who are also directly or otherwise connected to those in control of the means of production. Leading from this overlap are massive conflicts of interest which so often put the interests of private capital over public concerns. Many of the heads of education, public highways, environmental protection, are also in charge of coal companies, banks and industrial conglomerates. Moreover, many are from out of state with a consequent further loss of local control. The result of this power structure is the shaping of public policy to directly benefit the interests of capital. Examples of the elites influence include the poor enforcement of labor regulations, resulting in a horrific safety record in the mines. Highway contracts are often awarded within this boys' club and strip mining goes ahead without regulation or even permission.

In common with third world aid, federal money to West Virginia in the form of welfare appears to put back something that capital withdraws, but in total it receives only \$524 per person compared with \$821 nationally (Dix, 1973). The difference between these figures is accounted for by extra federal spending on defense, atomic energy, education, labor and housing development funding in other states. This federal ambivalence to the roots of Appalachia's poverty was highlighted by the lack of action following the disaster at Buffalo Creek. A dam built to prevent coal waste entering Buffalo Creek burst, killing many and leaving most of the community homeless, yet the local business/political alliance refused to take responsibility for the disaster or to pay for the clean up. Intervention from Washington was slow and woefully inadequate (Hankins 1973).

Policy approaches

Public policy has been largely shaped by these three discourses on the description and explanation of poverty, both in Appalachia and elsewhere in the US. The majority of action, including the “War on Poverty” (from the 1920s) are large scale, homogenous projects. Top-down programs in Appalachia such as the ARC are typical of these “solutions” based upon such partial perspectives (see below). Most of the money passing through these initiatives has been distributed to pork-barrel projects, of which alarmingly few are even in the core region of poverty. Instead they tend to be located in the outlying, richer, counties, most of which were added later to take advantage of ARC status. Some money has gone towards education and sanitary schemes and facilities, though the vast majority has been used to expand the highway system, thus reduce the physical isolation seen to be at the root of economic and social underdevelopment (see above). Development has somehow been defined to include minimum-wage, “flexible” (i.e. no security or benefits) retail and service jobs, partly to cater to second home owners, with minimal local multiplier effects. The symbol of Wal-Marts along corridor-H, a proposed interstate intended to incorporate central-western West Virginia into Washington’s cultural hinterland, is particularly apt here.

There are a few signs of change to this form of policy, including a number of extension and outreach programs organized by individual states. There is a shift in both the emphasis and scale of policy, with smaller, self-help initiatives being somewhat favored, providing more appropriate resources--knowledge, small capital and networks of support. These services can only be effective however if they feed into existing social practices, rather than imposing alien ideas and techniques. Critical to this is a much greater understanding and involvement of local cultural contexts, especially the political implications, both public and private of these interventions.

Whilst the various perspectives outlined above all add greatly to our knowledge of regional transformation and the policies do provide some qualified benefits, there still remain many areas of concern. The first is the omission and silence of individuals and groups from the discussions (a lack of diversity of voices in the terms of feminist and postmodern discourse) which these narratives tend to re-produce. Next, dependency theory emphasizes capital's omnipotent power over labor's powerlessness. Third, public history is favored over private experience, specifically "male" production of coal over "female" reproduction in the sphere of the home or in service industries. Though not disputing that such divisions are very real, they are not always so clear-cut, and these forms of analysis tend to naturalize them, making it harder to imagine or work towards alternative visions. Moreover, by not considering the "other" in these relationships, policy prescriptions will inevitably favor formal, public, legislative proposals, which cannot help to ameliorate social and environmental injustice without alternative, often more informal strategies which include more voices.

All three approaches, traditional regional, culture of poverty and dependence, and the development policy that results, tend to construct a very passive sociological model of how individuals react to various oppressive practices. There are differences across time and space in the way people can react to this hegemony. Not everybody needs to be "out there" on the picket lines for there to be widespread resistance to exploitation. Opposition can come in many different forms, some more powerful than others. This chapter begins to show these differences, both in how local hegemonic structures and mechanisms are produced through spatial practices, and also introduces some of the historical reactions to these patterns of dominance.

New regional geographies

A cultural political history of Appalachia should bring together a number of perspectives, in order to demonstrate the interdependence of dominant and subordinate narratives. This section introduces how concepts of hegemony, ideology and consciousness can be used to write an alternative or new regional geography. Coal production and the communities that depended upon it, have been shaped by forces of capital through the actions of “The Company,” collective organizing of miners to form the UMW and the intervention, often on the side of the company by local, state and federal government--the State. The purpose of foregrounding the regional geography of labor struggles is to show the memories of resistance in this “radical region” that provide such a foundation for contemporary movements. A period of intense class struggle in the earlier decades of this century led into a period of relative stability of production and class relationships during the 1950s and 60s. I argue that this pact between labor and capital began to erode in the early 1970s, due to industrial restructuring and the emergence of new social movements, fighting for civil rights and environmental protection. Both of these forces acted inside and outside the region, producing a crisis of the regional discursive regime, that in turn led to the emergence of new spaces of practice and representation, a re-territorialization of struggle. This shift was marked by a new articulation of issues and differentiation in the practices of protest. “Coal” and “class” began to give way to an emphasis on family, community and the environment as the most salient concerns for mobilizing collective action. Because these were not of course entirely new concerns, they require that we look to the diversity of past events to understand the embeddedness of hegemony and exploitation, as well as the roots of liberation.

Hegemony in the hollow

A structural reading of central Appalachia assumes a powerful discursive regulation between coal producers, operators, local government interests and the union. The general structure of social relations may be described as hegemonic, with an implicit consensus on the form of expected cultural norms, limits to knowledge and appropriate behavior. This hegemony balances competing forces, discourses and ideologies, legitimizing certain relations of production which transform the landscape. To do this requires the reproduction of perceptions which aim to maintain the status quo, however violent those relations (Comoroff and Comaroff 1991). In Appalachia, this dominance was first produced through the massive seizure of land from Native Americans. Later, small farmers were “bought out” at the turn of this century and soon after, extreme class exploitation began taking place in the mines.

Hegemonies however are never complete, so that the strikes in 1929-33 challenged and partially transformed how power legitimates and controls. Mostly, power lies in the silences, the naturalized uncontested representations of identity and landscape that we draw on. New regional geographies need to integrate both the structural and poststructural reading of hegemony; the powerful tensions between state, capital and community alongside the absences and social agency that contest dominance. Because of isolation and dependence on the Company, a naturalized silence existed amidst massive tensions, a forced acquiescence (Gaventa 1980).

The Clear-Fork Valley in Tennessee near the Kentucky border is an example of the formation, maintenance and decline of this discursive regulation. Gaventa’s (1980) powerful account of one valley’s encounter with King coal brings together the periods of rebellion and quiescence under one company’s hegemonic control. Neither rebellion nor quiescence is an aberration; instead they are theorized by Gaventa as active strategies which did not accept yet

must operate within the dominant regime. Discontent at the workplace was effectively controlled, channeled and dissipated through many aspects of hegemony: access to land, a monopoly on jobs, media sanctioning, accommodation by the union and the “ritual” of local politics. This alliance of local interests was able to contain labor’s impact with minimal concessions.

I mentioned previously the concentration of land ownership through seizure and coerced buyouts. One of the structural weaknesses is that absentee owners control 66% of West Virginia’s private taxable property.¹⁹ In the (Clear-Fork) Valley, the primary interests are the Company, *American Association* founded by Alexander Arthur, which owns 45,000 acres and the local elite, in particular the Family, who own 550 acres. Combined with the corporate nature of the coal-chemical industrial complex in the region, which is now West Virginia’s largest dollar value industry, massive capital outflow results, so further draining capital and control outside the region (Dix, 1973). The dominance of the family developed out of their position as large landowners, members serving as supervisors, landlords and merchants in the coal camp days. Since then, they have become unofficial mediators between the Company and communities, also controlling food stamps through the court house, jobs and housing. In elections, the Family therefore command considerable authority (Gaventa 1980). Public challenges by non-elites are deterred by feelings of inadequacy, fear of reprisal, or resignation that elections are a ritual battle given the power of the elite to dominate the agenda. Though apparently a radical institution, the

¹⁹ Figures from Appalachian Land Ownership Taskforce (1983). “Private land” includes all that not owned by various scales of government, including the Monongehela National Forest which covers a large portion of western West Virginia. Surface ownership does not always match ownership of coal or gas seams below ground, hence some “space” will have multiple title deeds.

union is critical to reproducing this hegemony, particularly under the presidency of John L Lewis, discussed later.

Ideologies of dominance and protest

A second modality of power is ideology, discourses which are critical to the formation, reproduction and transformation of hegemonic practices. Ideologies are the articulated and more openly contested systems of meanings or worldviews, which different groups assert as they battle for hegemonic power. These are powerful ideas, wrenched into the open and to public debate by various interests and given names such as heterosexism and bourgeois idealism. An example of this are the many labor disputes fought over a company's accusation of communism and the union's counter claim of a right to collective organizing. These struggles occur within a hegemony which structures the power available to competing claims, enabling some, effectively silencing others.

The union's initial strength came mainly through federal intervention in the 1930s following years of frustrated attempts at organizing divided communities. During the strikes, the local media critically reflected the anti-union sentiment, appealing to an ideology of law and order, patriotism and god, against the "communist" organizers. The union was led by John L. Lewis, a contradictory figurehead loved and loathed by miners for his power and abuse of it. He secured high wages and reasonable benefits over the years in return for stable production and increasing mechanization, yet his ruthless pursuit of this goal and for loyalty to the union line was eventually his downfall. Lewis' ideology was one of strength through unquestioning obedience, the right of workers to a decent wage secured through a competitive and efficient industry. From his earlier years as a radical recruiting union members, he changed to a more conciliatory

position, negotiating differences rather than fighting every inch. Ideology is thus a set of beliefs, backed by actions that are used to create a unified position of strength. The UMW was itself a site where alternative ideologies became subject to debate in the battle for the presidency, first in 1968, then successfully in 1972 as the authoritarian regime was challenged by the democratic ideal (see chapter 5 for more details).

Grappling with consciousness

Hegemony and ideology are never neutrally experienced, but are differentiated through people's consciousness and representation (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). The discursive regulation of coal in Appalachia is constantly manipulated by individuals and groups to create distinct identities. Through partial recognition, ambiguous perceptions, chaotic orderings, we write *histories*. It is from these individually and collectively written and translated understandings that contingent resistances are drafted, alliances made. Such strategies do not require a mythical complete consciousness or theory of hegemony, nor a mythical complete knowledge of all consequences of an action. Rather, as the Comaroffs write in another context of conquest: "much of the Tswana response to the mission encounter was an effort to fashion an understanding of, and gain conceptual mastery over, a changing world" (*ibid.* 31).

It is the level of consciousness that encompasses perhaps our most fundamental ideas of experiencing, manipulating and challenging uneven relations of power. Gaventa (1980) follows Freire's writing on the Latifundia of Latin America in describing the "culture of silence" that dominates the Valley. Trying to represent people's consciousness is notoriously difficult for we are making a claim to know their authentic patterns and processes of thought and self-reflection. Though I can provide no primary evidence here, I want to suggest that the early 1970s in

Appalachia saw the beginning of a perceptible, if highly uneven shift, in the collective consciousness of communities in places such as the Clear Fork Valley. Freire (1970) labels this transformation “conscientization”, which refers to politicization and mobilization not necessarily by outside agents but a process of critical self-reflection, “the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence” (81).

The regime

Expansion of coal mining rapidly accelerated during the First World War, with high demand and a shortage of labor also leading to better wages. With the armistice, demand fell and men flooded home, both returning soldiers and new migrants. The United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) continued its push for unionization to stabilize employment, seeking better safety conditions and a decent “family” wage. A series of strikes soon erupted, notably at Matewan in Mingo County, southern West Virginia. Owners needed to prevent these isolated efforts combining forces, so pre-empted this enlarged scale of conflict by using their networks of power with local lawmakers to ban secondary action. Workers could now only picket at their own place of employment and not travel to protest at other mines. “It seems like its illegal / to fight for the union anymore.”²⁰ When miners attempted to cross the Logan/Mingo county border to help their “brothers” the battle of Blair Mountain ensued, miners fighting a combination of police, private militia and enraged elite.

By the mid-1930s, John L. Lewis, leader of the UMWA tried to convince operators to cooperate by reducing capacity, thus increasing wages and above all stabilizing production and

jobs. This tactic failed, so he switched to unionizing the workers, and by 1940, 90% of coal production in the east was organized (Couto 1993). Lewis made new demands following The Second World War--a health, welfare and retirement fund. A combination of strikes, federal involvement and the owners need to gain new markets in electricity generation (requiring stable production), led to the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) in the 1950s. Amongst other features, this provided a mechanism for compensating miners who were laid off due to mechanization.

Trading off jobs for compensation is often seen by miners as betrayal by Lewis, with 250,000 miners laid off between 1950-60. Eliminating small mines was vigorously supported by the union leadership, who even financed mechanization to help supply the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and allegedly organized violence to prevent strikes. Reform eventually followed, principally through the Black Lung movement seeking workers compensation and the Miners for Democracy (Yarrow 1990). New challenges from western production in the mid-70s--large, mechanized strip mining, and imports from South Africa, Venezuela and Columbia undercut Appalachian coal. More generally the demand for coal was falling, with oil, natural gas and fossil fuel alternatives growing. Despite some resurgence in the central region during the 1970s due to the energy crisis, pits continued to close. Towns, even whole counties such as McDowell, lost jobs and their whole economic base; whole communities fled to the cities.

An example of the continuity of local political structures, is evidenced by the Buffalo Creek mining disaster of February 26, 1972 when a retaining dam built by the Pittston mining company

²⁰ From a traditional union song "Which side are you on," by Florence Reece, written during the miners' strike in Harlan Co., Kentucky in the 1930s. The quote refers to the powerlessness of unions collective action without the ability to picket mines, a strategy used by the Thatcher government in the early 1980s to bust the unions, particularly the miners.

broke, releasing 130 million gallons of water into a narrow, crowded valley, killing 124 and leaving 4,000 homeless (Hankins, 1973). Pittston declined responsibility, saying it was an “act of God.” A whole string of underground explosions throughout Appalachia have killed hundreds of miners through the years, including Hurricane Creek, eastern Kentucky and Fairmont, West Virginia, bringing numerous calls for proper regulation and the regular inspection of mines. State government, especially in West Virginia and Kentucky, has a notorious reputation for lax enforcement, second only to the companies disregard for safety.

The fight to alter hegemonic socio-spatial relations must thus be made alongside struggles to represent history. Gathering oral and collective histories of the past is essential to this project, forming part of the strategies of contemporary social movements. Integrating these non-traditional approaches with more formal analysis has always been at the heart of gaining support movement (Ryan 1992). Chapter five uses a methodology which can begin to use this knowledge to transform academic discourses of cultural politics, which can in turn help to elucidate the contradictions of organized oppositional praxis.

A crisis of legitimacy

Various shifts in and challenges to the hegemonic relations of union, capital and the state began to converge by the early 1970s. Three issues emerged which began to split the union line, thus undermining the “instilled conception of the appropriate relationship between leaders and led” (Gaventa 1980, 200). It was this position of dependency and loyalty to the regime which had previously prevented the emergence of opposition to union leaders and their policies. John L. was found to be promoting strip-mining without concern for environmental degradation and reacting violently to local resistance. The Union was also ignoring Black Lung and other health

issues. Thirdly, unemployment from rationalization threatened to bankrupt both the pension plan and whole counties.

Within the coal industry, the oil crisis produced a brief boom in coal, but internal restructuring by companies including Massey led to massive unemployment and less stable non-union jobs. If the Company could not provide well paid jobs then why suffer environmental degradation in silence? Couto (1993) analyses how Massey tried to balkanize the industry in the mid 1980s, using its global scale of production to counter its dependence upon local resources. Eventually, Massey's attempt to impose separate contracts for each mine, claiming that they were different companies, failed. Its dominance across the coalfields however remains intact, even increased. The precarious nature of miners historical success in winning rights, is underlined by Pittston's action to stop paying into the benefits and pension funds, forcing the strike of 1989-90.

Over the years, various scandals have linked public figures with corruption and embezzlement, leading to calls for a democratization of politics in the region. Federal intervention for example through the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) brought "development" through highways and limited social infrastructure. Nationally, a string of legislation in the 1970s represented the success of the environmental, feminist and anti-racist movements, providing progressive and powerful levers for local groups to invoke both rhetorically and through the courts. Together these have to some extent helped create a more outward looking politics.

A final challenge to the hegemony was presented by various "cultural" groups to locate their work within an Appalachian tradition which includes a tradition of folk music and oppositional politics. Examples include: video documentaries (Gaventa 1980), workshops, Appalachian studies literature and courses. A community videotaping and British documentary in the Valley

provided an interesting focus for developing local participation and breaking the “structure of silence.” This “new” consciousness was more a means of channeling existing discontent in more productive ways and included demands to raise taxes on coal and opposition to a new strip mine which met with the force of a still influential hegemony. Silence from local media was combined with strategies of containing community solidarity including mis-information, hiring a few local men along with latent threats of eviction and family layoffs. Together, these new cultural productions help to produce a pre-protest discursive practice, necessary before more effective wide-ranging public struggle can begin. It is through disseminating alternative representations of history, tradition and legitimacy that a mass oppositional consciousness can find its voice, so providing a resource for future alliances.

Chapter V

The cultural politics of scale, local dependence and alliance in Appalachia

*“Which side are you on boys, which side are you on?...
We set off to join the picket lines/for together we cannot fail,
We got stopped by police at the county lines
They said “go home boys or you’re going to jail.”*

(Florence Reece, 1930s union song.)

Any effort to understand the contemporary processes shaping Appalachia will inevitably reflect the characteristics chosen to represent it. By focusing in this thesis on the actions and discourses of social movements, as both a measure and an agent of change, the narrative should escape some of the problems of traditional regional geography, reflecting a dynamic and grassroots perspective. This chapter is organized into five sections, each recounting a narrative-analysis of one aspect of the geography of social movements, concluding with a summary of the multiple scales produced by these militant particularisms, both individually and collectively. The stage is set by an introduction to the idea of “free spaces” which are a means of imagining the counter-hegemonic space of protest, the ways in which participants come together to escape the dominant culture. Each of the case studies considered here are then classified into traditional, new and hybrid social movements. This division gives an opportunity to compare and contrast their circumstances, as well as the different issues each face. One aspect considered next is the role of memory as a powerful and, I argue, essential ingredient of successful organizing. The

discussion then turns to consider the internal and external structures and alliances of these groups to trace how each movements strategies are profoundly geographical.

First a note on method. In the two previous chapters, I developed a language to describe the power of geography to describe and analyze social change, and then a context of power and hegemony in Appalachia. Though all of the concepts from these are important, it is Lefebvre's discourse on space as practice, representation and representational that will be emphasized here, in order to demonstrate the spatiality of militant particularisms. Following on from the history given above, it is important to see these strategies as evidence of both continuity of previous protests, but also to note the significant development of new modes of activism, in particular the rise of community at the crux of the movement. The two anthologies that this chapter draws heavily upon for its examples, refer constantly to the salience of community to each groups ability to control power, the strength of local ideas, participation and networks of support. The tasks include: to draw links between the specifics of each case, to note the scales not mentioned explicitly and that appear to be important, to come up with a geography of how community operates, why it is successful, as well as to challenge some myths about harmony and the utopian ideology of community. Mostly this analysis looks at how universal ideas of justice, memory and empowerment are radically re-articulated between places in the re-shaping of cultural politics in Appalachia.

The production of free spaces

Free spaces are quite simply what a social movement is fighting for, a concept to describe a way of living apart from or outside of the routine exploitation and oppression of one group of people by another. It is an idealized term for the sort of everyday spatial practices possible

without the hardships imposed by the structures of capitalism, patriarchy and racism. Free spaces are at once imaginative, utopian constructs, as well as being used to describe the sense of community in strikes, such as depicted in Kopples' (1976) documentary "Harlan County, USA" and at Pittston 3 as described by Sessions and Ansley (1993). Generally, these are democratically organized protests, typified by ongoing debates on issues ranging from the use of violence to how to encourage participation in the movement. The emancipatory potential of free spaces naturally rests upon the extent to which its members are challenging the system. In Appalachia many of these protests are against the coal companies, hence in the past at least, they tended to compete for space (ideological, practical, etc.) only along class lines. What the new movements represented here do, as well as what critical histories of previous actions show, is that these dimensions can be made much broader.

When individuals get together to challenge the status quo, they are attempting to create an alternative mode of living, in Lefebvre's terms a representational space that combines collective resistance to dominant practices and promotes alternative values of justice and democracy. According to Sara Evans and Harry Boyte who developed the concept, free spaces are :

public places in the community...the environments in which people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills and values of cooperation and civic virtue...settings between private lives and larger-scale institutions where ordinary citizens can act with dignity, independence and vision (Evans and Boyle 1986).

This is a space that transforms the daily rituals and routines of work and home into that of activism, with its own cultures of spectacle at the picket-line, living on strike pay and keeping the family together.

It is the assertion of the universalist goals of the enlightenment such as personal freedom at the local scale, that makes social movements such interesting cases to watch. At the Pittston strike (1989-90), organizers developed an anti-corporate campaign that challenged not only the financial activities at the root of class divisions, but also the companies' moral conduct. Similarly the Harlan County strike against Duke Power reversed the dominant narrative of the Company's paternalism, calling its practices barbaric and the miners own demands rational, based on their rights as humans and citizens. Indeed, the unions and other movements often see their most powerful strategy in claiming justice on their side, their desire to produce a space that is socially fair. Yet in situations such as Harlan County or as Gaventa's (1980) study of the Clear Fork Valley make clear, it is exceedingly difficult to gain legitimacy in the courts when the justices are related to the Company by birth or deed and the media fails to question either.

In addition to struggles in the public sphere of the law and popular discourse, militant particularisms must produce arenas where their constituents can feel safe to express their ideas, anger and other emotions, a community for psychological as well as material support. At Matewan in the 1930s and again at Pittston in the 80s, this free space took the form of camps. It was vital that these were set up away from the traditional center of the town because the Company often owns most of the housing and will intimidate strikers more easily in "its" streets. Shelter, food and organizing became considerably more efficient in these temporary homes, where individuals could be protected from the hired gun thugs (Sessions and Ansley 1993)

For many of the groups, especially when times are hard, it is important to have a community that sees itself as unified, that it can collectively imagine this struggle as representing a very real success, no matter how the larger campaign may be evolving. For a group such as Highlander, dedicated to education and building regional alliances, that has only long term organizational goals, this gradual building of a utopian future is necessarily more qualified. Freedom for regional activism relies on educating the next generation of leaders to take on whatever issues arise, hence it is more difficult to see the concrete spaces its action represent. Workshops are one of the places that participants can feel part of a larger sense of liberation, according to Glen (1993) and others who take part in them. By countering problems of fear, pride, dependency, racism and poverty, ingrained practices begin to be questioned, and alternative futures imagined. The challenge is obviously to translate these feelings back to the leaders own home communities.

So what then are the major restrictions to free spaces, where are their boundaries and how might they actually work to prevent progressive reform? Obviously a lot of these questions have contingent answers, for the construction of any space depends upon its participants. But some general statements can be drawn from the movements considered here. The most important strength and limit to these spaces is that they are almost without exception, bounded by the idea of community. I will return to this critical problem in the following pages but it should be noted in the “traditional” cases outlined in the next section, that the union is primarily focused on local class issues. Other possible issues, such as the bodies of miners or their wives, families, or nationalism are rarely questioned, but simply used to bolster the campaign. This necessary fiction of unity is often argued on the ground of political expediency, but will gloss over differences that may eventually emerge to split the movement. The next few sections will show

how free spaces are deployed in local contexts, of strategies used to take account of certain differences.

The survival of tradition in the coal fields and the union movement

Resuming the story of the social and economic restructuring in the coal fields of Appalachia through the 1970s, the coal companies continued to mechanize their operations, lay off miners or use the threat of doing so to bargain for better productivity. In addition, the operators began to re-organize their geography of ownership. During the 1960s many companies actively opposed the new safety and environmental protection legislation that had begun to regulate the coal and other industries. At the time that state and federal bodies were trying to rationalize the spaces of extraction, the companies employed what Yarrow (1990) and others have termed “balkanization.” Mines were subleased to small operations and local managers, who offered production bonuses to miners if they did not join the UMW. This is a strategy that followed years of concentration in the ownership of the mines into larger holding companies, that then proved to be vulnerable to public control.

Sites of extraction and their surrounding labor markets in the hollows were thus put into direct competition to provide the best conditions for production, a race to the bottom of standards for miners and the land. Standards in health, safety and degradation of the landscape quickly fell as each mine was undercapitalized in the rush for cheap coal. “Having to overlook safety considerations in order to keep a job leaves a bitter taste” (Yarrow 1990, 41). Many of these fly-by-night operations would close rapidly and shift production elsewhere without paying their employees. A cycle of physical and psychological problems soon followed, the absence of a regular paycheck coupled with the feeling of loss and resentment towards an already-hated

industry worsened. Unemployment leads to tension, which often disturbs familial relations, hence the increase of divorce after job loss. Yarrow reports that domestic violence and alcohol abuse are also likely to increase.

The hollows underwent a further shift, no longer the site of the spatial practice of exploitative production and yet dependable work, the routine of mining as the reality of communities stretching back generations broke down. Yarrow describes this shift in dependence to one of reliance upon existing familial and community ties. These supports proved to be both resilient and highly adaptive to the new conditions, with men finding odd jobs, using flea markets instead of formal capitalist ones, and women working outside the home. Each of these changes had fundamental repercussions on gender and class relations. Yet perhaps surprising to many outsiders is the continuity in these places, as communities continued to struggle along traditional lines to preserve both the economic and cultural significance of coal.

A series of strikes across the coalfields erupted in the early 1970s in reaction to strip-mining and layoffs. These intensely local cases of militant particularism have been documented using oral histories, film and other methods that attempt to represent the actual process of giving voice to protest. Mary Bingham (1993) collected oral histories of the women who participated in the hostile strike of 1972 in Knott County, Kentucky. Strip-mining companies had used the familiar tactics of economic blackmail, red-baiting and violence since the fifties to make residents quiescent to the destruction of hills, river channels and the flooding of roads that resulted. Aware of the industries willingness to use violence, a coalition of local activist groups decided to make women directly involved in the planned occupation.

As the women arrived at the gate to the mine, the miners and gun thugs threatened but did not harm them, despite the booze made readily available by the Company. Eight women stayed

in a tent pitched on a bench²¹, preventing the bulldozers and drills from digging any coal. Those involved consider the action on reflection to be a success on many levels, halting production, sending a message that strip-mining would meet organized protest, and bringing local and national media attention. Most importantly, although the groups involved did not survive long, an issue dealt with below, the sit-in acted as a consciousness-raising moment, many of those involved having gone on to work for food co-ops, peace groups, environmental actions and health clinics (Bingham 1993).

A year later in nearby Harlan County, miners were again struggling to change dominant practices and ideas, this time the central issue was not destruction of the land but the social injustice by Duke Power in not signing onto the national UMW contract. The often desperate battle to make their demands into legitimate and binding guarantees for ethically decent health, safety and pay is hauntingly presented in Barbara Kopple's (1976) film, documenting the 13 months of the strike as it impacted all aspects of the lives of those living and working in Brookside, Kentucky under the shadow of the Eastover Company's mine. The local union faced the powerful alliance of those interests present in most of this analysis: an absentee holding company, Duke Power, whose only interest is profit, state and federal governments looking the other way to willful neglect by Duke and its immoral strike-breaking tactics.

The scenes in Kopple's film of Harlan county are reminiscent of John Sayles' film *Matewan* set in the 1930s, as both sides of the conflict invoke the "Bloody Harlan" strikes of that earlier era. As was the case then, the state police upheld the rights of the scab workers to get through the picket line and turned a blind eye to the open intimidation of the gun thugs under the brutal

²¹A bench is the platform created by cutting coal.

leadership of Basil the “foreman.” Judge Hogg is himself an operator, so the strikers and their wives expect and receive little justice in court later. At a press conference, Duke himself refers to the miners as “our people,” symbolic of the system of patronage, claiming to know best for their workers. Yet the conditions in Harlan County are obviously more indicative of the feudal or slave relations that divide rich from poor, those with work from those on relief, and keep a monopoly on the labor market by keeping other industries out of the hollows.

According to the many interviews and heated discussions recorded during and after the strike, a number of factors were critical to securing victory and the contract. Though the strike is over a single issue to make mining coal a safe and secure job, fought over class lines in a highly confrontational and masculinized battle, the “women’s club” provides some of the most memorable scenes, both in their meeting house and on the line. Months into the strike they continue to organize pickets at 5 a.m., devise new strategies to prevent the gun thugs bringing the scabs to work and demanding that theirs is the only just and democratic side as the sheriff balks at arresting Basil. Sadly it is a miner, Lawrence Jones’ death that brings Duke to the table to sign the UMW contract. “Blood has always been around getting more.” The ambivalent ending contrasts the jubilation of miners returning to work, to the grief of Lawrence’s 16 year old wife and his mother with captions of further strikes that soon followed the settlement at the Brookside mine.

Sessions and Ansley (1993) illustrate another of the large, organized forms of mass protest, the spectacle that accompanied the takeover of the Pittston 3 coal processing plant in St. Paul, Virginia in September, 1989. Following the lessons of the mostly ineffective strike against Massey in 1984, the UMWA was more cautious and considerably better prepared. Instead of a straightforward struggle at the site of the workplace, the union sought to transform the strike into

a community-wide issue. Actions by the owners and the courts to limit traditional actions, were enforced through a heavy-handed police presence and Pittston's own hired "gun-thugs," specifically against strike measures aiming to prevent scab production.

Though Sessions and Ansley were outsiders from Kentucky, they portray the inside stories of the takeover. Within the plant were 100 men who had walked unarmed to the main building to camp for seven days, whilst outside 20,000 supporters gathered at the entrance and along the road. This spectacle became a focus for multiple aspects of the strike. Participants drew their identity in part from previous coal strikes, singing amongst other songs "Which side are you on," from the 1930s, which linked them to the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) actions of the early 1980s in Britain, where it was also sung. The takeover was to extend the participants "free space," which had been previously created as Camp Solidarity and other communal safe places, challenging the owners control of their own turf. This highly symbolic act thus went far beyond a narrow reading of the meager seven days lost processing at Pittston. At the time of the spectacle, Sessions and Ansley (1993) note the incredible emotion at the gates, a sense of pride in temporarily reclaiming "their" territory. At an individual scale therefore it was a public spectacle filled with private lives, of families connected by radio across the plant's open space, everyday relations of prejudice transformed into a more democratic "community space."

Within the issue of employment conditions and the number of jobs, are struggles over who has access to those positions. During the years of growth in the coal industry in the 1970s, women fought for their right to earn their own "family wage" (Weiss 1993). The Coal Employment Project (CEP) faced an entrenched cultural tradition composed of owners, unions and workers, which collectively acted to exclude women from the mines, supported through an ideology of female passivity and quiescence. Despite the contradictory stereotype of a strong

“mountain mama,” active hostility from men, a lack of money for organizing and an absence of suitable progressive role models, hampered the CEP’s efforts beyond some token hiring.

Taxation on coal is an issue which has largely remained outside the arena of popular discourse throughout the history of primary resource extraction. Szakos (1990; 1993) catalogues the appalling state of local services in Eastern Kentucky which stemmed from the low rate of state tax and nil revenue for local governments. Public education is extremely poor, one fifth of water wells are contaminated by mineral extraction, roads are appallingly maintained, the absence of fire departments increases insurance rates and library provision is desperately meager.

In addition to taxation, concern over strip mining also began to be articulated in the 1980s in Kentucky, though in Tennessee, conflict stretched back into the early 1970s. Trucks were found to be destroying roads, coal was untaxed, slopes were being eroded because of foliage removal and water courses became silted, worsening flooding. Central to these concerns remained job loss, as the TVA demanded cheaper coal in a quantity which deep mining could not provide. To avoid the law, strip-mines were generally small scale, wild-cat operations which made prevention or compensation haphazard at best. Pay was good, but being non-union there were no long term benefits, and wages often went unpaid as companies fled. Conditions were dangerous, attempts at regulation and resistance frequently met with violent assaults and arson by the gun-thugs (Allen 1993).

Despite the success of many of these actions in securing contracts, developing an oppositional consciousness and networks of support, changes to the socio-economic fabric both in and outside the region was rapidly making this union-class strategy outdated. The percentage of miners was falling and new concerns about the environment were redirecting the concerns of communities to look beyond the simply correlation between the pit and poverty.

New forms of protest: the politics of regional and community development

What forms of collective protest might be possible in towns without a history of union activism, places that lack the social coherence that come from the single form of workplace experience so characteristic of mining communities? Many of the counties in Appalachia have never had a ton of coal mined yet there too there emerged militant particularisms from the 1970s. The major impediment to organizing these communities was their lack of tradition and the networks of support the UMW brings. Around the 1970s, a new discourse of development emerged based upon principles of community empowerment, with movements often organized around where people live, rather than where they work. There are many reasons for this shift which tended to be marked by an expanded agenda from traditional class concerns. Marxist scholars such as Harvey (1996) argue that losing class as a focus for resistance only weakens these groups power. But for movements such as the Workers' Rights Project (WRP) in South Carolina where unions are not as viable because of anti-labor legislation and smaller firms, this is a more viable strategy to increase voter participation and legal representation (Taylor 1990).

Though now often perceived as an area of impoverished agriculture, farming in Appalachia at the turn of the twentieth century provided a decent living and maintains an important role. For many families, it still provides valuable additional resources to cash wages. At times of extreme hardship, notably during layoffs or union action, home produce helps to sustain basic needs. Symbolically, farming reproduces an identity with the land that is important to social stability and the production of community. The issue of land ownership and its historical concentration as a process and problem is too seldom seriously considered in public development policy. Conflict over land can arise through the implementation of environmental conservation policies which

aim to prevent “damaging” development, yet which can act to stop poor land owners the chance of raising cash.²²

Tobacco farming in Kentucky is another example of marginal agriculture’s importance, where it is the economic mainstay of several families and communities there. Large multinationals now control so much of production, processing and distribution that they have effectively lowered the price floor of raw tobacco, pushing out the small-holders. Part of the decline in farm income is of course due to national health concerns, but the structure of power is also a problem. Large farms and conglomerates continue to make excellent profits, whilst smaller concerns are starved of subsistence and the capital to convert to other crops (Hamilton 1990; Hamilton and Ryan 1993).

Across rural America a farm policy reform movement is emerging through grassroots organizations, including the Community Farm Alliance in Kentucky, founded in 1985 (Hamilton 1990). Members are an alliance of farmers, their families, church goers and community activists who pursue two principle scales of action. Federal goals center on getting mandatory production quotas attune to family-sized farms and support prices to channel income through the market place instead of the present system of taxpayer support. At the local level, the CFA is working to rebuild the rural economy based on the principles of community accountability. The main obstacles to viable small farming come from debt, so one of their main tasks is to secure credit for machinery, seeds and fertilizer, as well as educate members in the intricacy of state credit law.

²² Exchange at colloquium: “Current issues in the management of West Virginia’s outstanding rivers and streams,” by Betsy Pyle, 7th October, 1994, at West Virginia University.

At the root of alternative development policies are efforts to diversify the economy so that farmers are never again at the mercy of fluctuations in tobacco prices or crop yields that vary with climate or pest invasions. Co-operatives such as the Family Farm Growers forge links between rural growers and urban consumers. A large amount of energy is spent convincing political representatives to support small farmer's, to go against the dominant discourse of large, corporate ownership as the most efficient way to farm the land. As Wendall Berry is quoted in Hamilton (1990, 73) "The agricultural economy of this region is not, for us, an abstract or theoretical issue. We are trying to survive, as farmers, as a family, and as a community."

Highlander is another Appalachian organization that is trying to build a similar network of activists and local people to organize for community empowerment. Unlike the CFA, Highlander is concerned with all manner of economic and social development, not just those based on agriculture. Founded by Miles Horton in 1932 in Tennessee, Highlander represents an interesting contrast to the other movements considered here. Not only has it mounted resistance over a number of issues, an evolving agenda of empowerment and leadership training, it has done so by building a regional scale of social networks and collective consciousness. Education has always been central to this ongoing approach, initially in regard to segregation and literacy issues for southern blacks, and from 1964 focusing more on poverty (Glen 1993).

Highlander's strategy is to use people's unrest with local systemic exploitation, such as strip-mining, water quality or housing issues as a means to catalyze community leadership. Through workshops held mostly at its center in Tennessee and outreach programs, these scattered discontents can be transformed into a radical network of activists. One of the fundamental issues of militant particularisms is that by only looking at one issue they do not confront broader structures of inequality, their protests can often simply transfer the problem somewhere else and

so members can become easily disheartened if they do not “win” quickly and clearly. Self-education projects help to train people to connect themselves and issues with those elsewhere, organizing themselves rather than relying on outsiders whose commitment might be questionable.

The closing of National Carbide’s plant in Ivanhoe, Virginia led to exactly this sort of local resistance by a civic league who “waged a campaign to educate themselves about the economy, to develop their own community-centered development, to start a literacy training center, to make officials accountable to them for the development of their own community” (Weller et al 1990, 20). Feelings of resentment and abandonment towards the company and local state were made worse when local government ignored the community’s needs in its attempt to simply replace one large plant with another. In order to combat the dominant development discourse, the league had to first understand the system before they could question it, “my bible under one arm and my dictionary under the other” (23).

Highlander was able to provide appropriate training and information for their struggle, giving them the power to challenge the local political elite’s right to rule. What many of those involved in this action experienced was a wider sense of identity not felt before, of being poor and Appalachian, yet not passive as the stereotypes would normally portray this class, but as a strength. Each of the testimonials by the women from Ivanhoe tells a story of how they learned the system and learned not to fear it. They were treated as inferiors, both for being women and for being poor, yet one now says she feels superior for having an open mind about development, for becoming in-dependent of the system.

As powerful an alternative as this model represents, it can at times be more idealistic than realistic, imposing a new code of spatial practice, “community development” onto a very diverse

locality. Some of the most impressive movements in Appalachia are those that are a hybrid of those discussed above, maintaining a balance between tradition and the desire to break free from the dependence of the system.

Hybrids of resistance and change

Many of the groups from Fisher's (1993) text, from which this section title is taken, bear witness to the incredible tensions unleashed by social struggle. On the one hand, if the protest is to have any lasting impact, it must have some fairly strong concept of the free space it is fighting for. On the other, is the sometimes unbearable weight of history, transmitted through individual and collective memory that makes up traditional practices of both rebellion and quiescence in a community (Gaventa 1980). Groups such as Save Our Cumberland Mountains (SOCM), Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens (YCCC) and Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC) are examples of militant particularisms that have been more successful than others at negotiating these differences. To do so they have waged campaigns of education to understand the spatial practices of their members' lives, clarified the dominant representations used by local elites to legitimate the historical and geographical inequalities they rule over, and figured how best to build and sustain the representational spaces of strikes, survival and alternative living that offer a viable alternative.

In Yellow Creek, Kentucky, near to Gaventa's (1980) study area of Clear Valley, pollution by the Middleboro Tanning Company led to community resistance which progressed from "just fussin'" to collective organizing (Cable 1993). This transformation took place over a number of scales over time and space and provides a third model of organizing which is more sustainable

and inclusive. National environmental legislation and green ideology provided an important framework to legitimate the YCCC's claims.

The local political elite, including the owners of the tanning company, had conspired for years to produce a cultural quiescence towards the pollution. Decisions were made affecting the entire community without consultation, hence issues such as pollution from the tanning process were prevented from entering public debate. Local discourse through the media and education were controlled to produce certain passive forms of socialization and appropriate practice. Pollution from the tanning firm in Middlesboro into Yellow Creek has occurred since the late nineteenth century. Conditions worsened with new technology in the 1960s, when in 1976 the creek was declared "dead." Cultural balkanization is the legacy of small, isolated coal camps in the area, deliberately kept introverted by each company to prevent collective action. Cable discusses the mechanisms which together produced individualism concerning local and universal affairs, with public politics nonexistent, and religion tightly controlled. Local and state government either did nothing to prevent this human and environmental exploitation, or actively encouraged it through a pro-business attitude which continues today.

Opposition began to form when restructuring of the tanning industry led to a change in ownership, the introduction of modern processes and a worsening of pollution. Consolidation of rural public schools enabled the formation of a wider social network, based upon an identity with a larger area of student friendships. Another valuable local asset to the movement was Larry Wilson, who returned to farm locally having gained valuable experience of leadership and knowledge of protest in the unions elsewhere. Such was the fear created by the political elite, that the first few meetings of the YCCC in July 1980, were tiny, private events. Initial strategies were to attend council meetings, which gained media attention, but which activated class lines.

This action provoked a reaction of gunshots, dog poisonings and the harassment of YCCC members' children at school by teachers and the elite's kin.

Such intense backlash by the elite was caused not by their fear of losing money but power, for few taxes are collected on the plant and most of the workers come from Tennessee and Virginia. To counter such entrenched practices thus required more than local protest and so in 1983, YCCC launched a \$31million class action suit against the city for failing to enforce environmental regulations. Support came mostly from outside, principally via Highlander, the regional research and education institute, though this actually led to an erosion of local support with a perceived loss of autonomy. Though the city settled out of court in 1985, they failed to comply with the terms, and further by 1990, the EPA caved in and conceded to the city's demands for leniency.

Despite the failure of legislative action to directly prevent pollution in Yellow Creek, Wilson was able to generate alternative successes. YCCC had by this time evolved into a complex community interest organization, tackling local issues including incineration, dumping and strip mining, alliances of interest which considerably widened its support base. Moreover, individuals participated in the group became radicalized, a transformation of political and cultural consciousness which included an identity with Appalachia and its history of struggle.

Taxation on coal is an issue which has largely remained outside the arena of popular discourse throughout the history of primary resource extraction. Szakos (1990; 1993) catalogues the appalling state of local services in Eastern Kentucky which stemmed from the low rate of state tax and nil revenue for local governments. Public education is extremely poor, one fifth of water wells are contaminated by mineral extraction, roads are appallingly maintained, the absence of fire departments increases insurance rates and library provision is desperately meager.

Save Our Cumberland Mountains (SOCM) is one of the strongest citizen organizations in the region with 1500 families. It started in response to strip mining in Tennessee during the late 1960s, combined with stories of low taxes and even these being evaded. Citizens from 5 coal counties got together in 1972, most of them experienced union members. Under the initial leadership of two outsiders, then later a former deputy and coal miner, JW Bradley, the movement grew, primarily challenging the operators through litigation. They soon turned their efforts to fight, like many other groups, for a federal ban to strip-mining, but the 1977 Act merely acted to legitimate the industry. Still in the following years, SOCM reported wild-cat operations under the act, but the state failed to enforce regulation and members were the target of assaults and arson.

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC) in many ways parallels the development of resistance beyond a focus on coal and class to an emphasis on leadership, community empowerment and sustaining interest in multiple issues.

The cultural politics of memory

What might it mean to write a geography of memory in Appalachia? In previous chapters, it has been shown that memory is fundamental to organizing movements for social change, both theoretically in feminist and other critical literatures, and in understanding the history of resistance in the region. Put simply, people's individual and collective memories of the landscapes and communities they inhabit vary across space, and these differences are salient to the story of how and why militant particularisms gain power. Many of the people quoted in these case studies are quite conscious of this role of past experience and thinking in the course of their own politicization. Radical histories breed radical actions, whether these took place at the scale

of the home, community or another site of growing up amidst political consciousness. Naturally not all of the cases used here were explicit about the role of memory, preferring to concentrate on contemporary strategies of members of what led them to be there. Yet, discussions of memory are particularly important to the production of free spaces (see above), for once established, these become critical symbols of hope for later protests, inscribed both in place and on the imagination.

The role of memory is probably clearest in the coal camp communities, with their histories of a tension between quiescence towards the companies despite massive exploitation and often violent struggle in the face of an armed, aggressive hegemonic elite. The 1920s and 30s were a period marked by intense conflict as the UMW began to organize a marginalized and divided group of largely immigrant workers. It was during the strikes such as Matewan that mining, class and the union began to be formed as a social identity and political reality. Pits and the surrounding camps became ingrained as the site of class struggle, spaces of intense bitterness towards the operators who handed out the scit and the gun thugs protecting the shaft entrances with machine guns. Despite or because of the threat of being laid off, evicted, paid less or shot, the hollows were intensely politicized spaces both in public and private.

After the war and until the transition in the 1970s, a period of relative stability in production and class relations under unionization, was presided over by John L. Lewis who had been responsible for much of the earlier acrimony. In return for an increase in wages and modest benefits, John L. oversaw a significant reduction in the workforce as mechanization spread through the mines and strip-mining began to replace deep-mining. In 1950 there were 415,000 workers, declining to 130,000 by 1969. Perhaps more significantly, the UMW also promised not to strike, an undemocratic decision that prevented any public protests during the post-war period. The memories from this period instead portray individual struggles at the scale of the body, the

communities' voice effectively silenced. Black Lung disease was one of these issues that was for so long the burden of the miner and his family, with the Companies refusing to accept medical evidence that coal dust was settling in the lung and destroying delicate tissues. The union seemed deliberately not to push to make the disease included in the welfare fund, financed by a royalty on each ton of coal (Judkins 1993). The Black Lung Association was eventually successful in getting a section included in the benefits program of the 1969 Coal Mine and Safety Act, largely a response to national attention following the Farmington disaster in West Virginia a year earlier that killed 78 miners.

These two contrasting periods were followed in the 1970s by an outbreak of social protest in the coalfields of central Appalachia that was guided by the memories of previous actions. Barbara Kopple's film on the strike in Harlan County vividly demonstrates these displays of affection for and intense anger at the past. Asked about why she decided to join the protest at the Brookside Mine, one woman recalls sitting round the kitchen table in the 1930s at the time of so called "Bloody Harlan," her father talking about the union and organizing, of being on the picket line. She also remembers her grandfather dying of Black Lung. It was around that kitchen table that she "learned to hate the Company."

The days of "Bloody Harlan" are a constant reference throughout the film, for strikers and company men alike. Both claim they do not want to go back to those wild and dangerous times, at the same instant making the same provocative gestures, confronting the other side to retaliate. Yet the films' opening images are of the dark, hard work with machines and danger that the union is fighting to preserve, and it is this memory of generations going down the pit that has forged the unity of a largely masculine culture and experience, without which it seems the strikers would never have lasted the 13 months. One miner, a proud striker and agitator

recollects his first action when he was a breaker boy, paid pennies to sort shale from coal. It was then that he first learned the different perspectives, that the unions, the politicians, even the priests, all want peace in the camps. Yet he also discovered the power of solidarity, where ideas of struggle are bound up in violence of all types.

In a separate room to the men, the women presented a very different but necessary and complimentary space of strategic resistance. What came through were memories of being silenced by both the spaces of production and the strike, of learning how to be a legitimate and public voice in the ongoing struggle. Though they desired a better family life as miner's wives after getting the contract signed, their inspiration came from the women's liberation movement, then sweeping across the US, their tactics of non-violence taken from the peace movement. The strike came at a critical juncture of reform in the UMW. Tony Boyle was again being challenged for the leadership, having previously organized the murder of Jock Yablosnski in 1969. This opposition to what was viewed as a dictatorial hierarchy, unresponsive to members needs, was led by the Miners for Democracy, who got Miller elected on a platform of "rank and file" democracy. It is this new language of social justice, citizenship and grassroots leadership that had already taken grip on the discourse of the miners wives' club in that same year, 1972. Here was a new memory being established that expanded the boundaries of the coal-class battle to include women and break the ground for new strategies across different scales (see section on external alliances).

A completely different memory of actions had framed the CFA's struggle to organize farmers in Kentucky. Though farmers are most commonly portrayed as politically and socially conservative, the Farmers Alliance in the 1870s began the largest mass movement in American history (Hamilton 1990), with radical demands for federal subsidies and the abolition of unfair

banking and railroad practice. Fifty years later, the farm crisis of the depression era led to a new grassroots movement, the National Farmers Union who lobbied for the terms of the New Deal, a policy that brought rural prosperity into the 1950s. This forerunner ultimately proved to be a treacherous memory, ignoring the geographical differences between then and now. Hamilton and Ryan (1993) argue that the farm movement missed strategic opportunities to target the politically powerful corporate influence, ignored regional differences in the impact of federal policies and did not build a grassroots movement capable of negotiating the best course of action.

As important as the tradition of radicalism is to understanding how militant particularism grows, is mapping those spaces of silence, of reluctance to voicing concerns. Both Gaventa's study of the Clear Valley (1980) and Sheri Cable's text on Yellow Creek (1993) demonstrate how hegemony is constructed through a complex process that prevents people from even thinking they can do something to change it. Gaventa describes how this condition, a process of producing quiescence, comes from years of interaction between the Company, State and Community. First of all, people only remember the local elite making decisions that affect the entire community, for with patronage comes stability in the face of change. It is hard to shake off this idea that what was all right in the past cannot fail now. Second is how a hegemonic regime prevents issues entering the public arena, through a combination of control of local media and threatening those that defy expected practices. Finally the elite control the institutions of socialization, appropriate class and other social relations are taught in schools, mines and churches. Together these produce a culture of individualism, where collective acts are few and tightly disciplined.

Memories are themselves constantly the domain of violent acts of appropriation as different groups attempt to secure their interpretations on past events to define landscapes of radical or passive histories. In the case of Yellow Creek, organizers were able to take advantage of

ongoing social transformation to break traditional patterns of fussin' and bring people together, based on more recent attempts to protest against the system. By publicising how they were ignored in council meetings, treated unfairly at hearings, made the victims of shootings and harrasment, YCCC made visible the structures of power that made their creek dangerous to swim in. These themselves became new memories, available when the group moved on to tackle related issues in the locality. Again, Highlander was an important tool in showing members that their experiences were common to people all over Appalachia, that as Milan Kundera wrote "the struggle against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."

Internal structure, tensions and the ideology of movement

Reading many of these accounts, I am struck by their deep optimism on many levels and the sense of unity of purpose in thought and action. Whilst I share a belief in the good these groups do, underlying any collective or social movement are of course a whole string of differences--of identity, intent and strategy. Part of the agenda for all of these groups is to negotiate between the differences that reflect local geographies, with the limitations that context can have on thinking about free spaces. Though initially it was the strength and uniqueness of resistance in Appalachia which interested me, increasingly they can also provide a mechanism to think about the conflicts inherent to organizing in other situations. Particularly useful is to understand the strategies which groups use to overcome those differences which are fundamental to constructing a more progressive cultural politics. Unfortunately, in many instances this critique came purely from my outsider's perspective, informed by authors such as Mohanty (1991) in her discussions of a politics of location. Where are race, gender, sexuality and a critical analysis of place for instance in many of these texts? In other places, some of these tensions did surface and are

referred to directly by the authors, sometimes uncritically, at others as the impetus to active internal restructuring of the movement to better cope with external dynamics.

Internal differences can often result from the conflict between schemes of ethics which influence the group. Harvey (1994) distinguishes four types of discourse which center on alternative ethical bases, as he sees dominating oppositional strategies in green politics: managerialism, romanticism, cultural identity and environmental justice. *Managerialism* may be used to describe much of what passes for green politics, which is often co-opted by capital to ease mass consciousness by appearing to do something. Though the examples gathered here tend to represent the more progressive aspects of Appalachian movements, there are elements of this discourse. Local business coalitions, as described by Weller *et al* (1990), use the promise of jobs and “local development” to divert attention from those who will gain most (themselves) from investment decisions setting up organized groups such as the unions, as deterrents to wealth.

Romanticism in the green movement essentializes and glorifies a pre-human nature to be defended at any cost, such as deep ecology (Pepper 1993). Folk traditions (local and non-local) are frequently invoked. In Appalachia the mountaineer provides such a model--the rugged, independent male, occasionally linked to the selfless mother figure--represent to some a lost culture, worthy of preservation. Romantic memory can provide an interesting yet highly conflicting site for establishing independence, especially as tradition is extremely vulnerable to cooption and commodification by the state and capital, to give the impression that nothing is wrong. Many writers and miners romanticize the unity of Bloody Harlan, yet the violence of those strikes provided a dangerous precedent and may have discouraged many people from being active to get the contract signed in 1972/3.

Also idealized but less mythical is Harvey's third category of *identity* politics. The reconstruction of historical exploitation is used to produce cohesive identity and legitimate contemporary rights, whether of land, jobs or welfare. The takeover of Pittston 3 clearly demonstrates the power of the past (Sessions and Ansley 1993). Though often a useful strategy, cultural heritage can easily be presented as static and conservative, acting to reinforce previous social divisions and omitting those marginalized by them, thus negating efforts at justice. Both racism and sexism have historically divided Appalachians, indeed this was often a technique used by elites to split the working classes. Women, once excluded from the pit were confined to identification with the home sphere, with little or no "respectable" paid work available in the isolated coal camps. Weiss (1990) shows that access to decent paid work remains elusive.

Feminism has long been theorizing about the connections between the division of private home from public work and politics. The reproduction of "motherhood" as an identity, an expected ideal and practice, can be both oppression within the sexual division of labor or liberatory, providing a secure home place and positive role models. hooks (1991) recounts that "home" and "mother" went beyond providing this space free from patriarchy and racism, to teach her critical social insight during her rural upbringing. In Bingham's (1993) account of women stopping the bulldozers, they appear to us mostly in traditional roles--caring mothers, sisters and wives--physically too weak to be a real threat. Similarly at Pittston 3, women's roles again as nurturers and providers of food and comfort, whilst it was male miners who were seen to overtly challenge the owners. What goes largely untold are the resistances inherent to any hierarchical division, of individual women being prevented from assuming positions of power within these organizations. A notable exception is at Ivinghoe, where it is women from the community who

first organized for local democratic development, subsequently jointly authoring this account (Weller *et al* 1990).

Anti-racism is mentioned in the more general chapters of *Fighting Back* (Fisher 1993) and *Communities in Economic Crisis* (Gaventa *et al* 1990), yet is not part of the chapters dealing with issues in central Appalachia. In part this reflects the reality of an overwhelmingly white region, but at the least it ignores the history of black slaves brought from the South by train after reconstruction to break the union strike.²³ Many African-Americans later left to escape the poverty and racism of the hollows, but those who remain are here further marginalized.

A vital resource for organizing in many parts of the world is the church. Religion has the potential to bring together people from many sides of a community to one place. Religion however provides a mixed effect on organizing, for example Christianity promotes freedom and fear, charity and judgment. In many of these accounts, the church is highlighted as an essential component of local networks, yet always as a passing footnote, never in a detailed and critical manner. Preachers in the hollows were for years paid by camp owners to propagate the interests of the elite, so notoriously conservative. Alternatively, the church has been at the foreground of a radical social critique, and as a mechanism for mobilizing militant particularism.²⁴

Harvey's fourth category of *environmental justice* describes many of the militant particularisms in Appalachia. These type of movements try to overcome the parochialism that Harvey sees as endemic to the others, through a firm commitment to a progressive agenda for social and environmental justice. They try as much as possible to remain autonomous from co-

²³ The factionalization fostered by owners between different ethnic groups--eastern, southern, western European and blacks is brilliantly captured in the film "Matewan."

option by capital, aware of the problems of being caught up in an imagined past, but especially conscious of not advancing the interests of one social grouping over another. This corresponds broadly with the earlier classification of “hybrid” organizing.

A final issue which is central to movements and which was responsible for considerable infighting in second wave feminism, is how best to organize their internal structure (Ryan 1992). Both Highlander and SOCM experienced enormous stress between the demands for effective strong organizing from the top and participation through local, grassroots democracy. Though firm leadership and the commitment of a few individuals are necessary to “get through” certain periods of a movement, only a broader base can provide long term support and indeed legitimacy for their actions. Integration is still more difficult with the large geographical area covered by these two groups. Highlander has chosen a fairly dispersed network, reflecting its identity as a resource for advice, contacts and training. SOCM is more committed to fighting single but linked issues through litigation and general education, so adopted a new structure of chapters, each electing representatives to the regional board (Allen 1993). Involving members at all levels from planning to implementing strategies is critical if there is to be long-standing changes to politics in Appalachia, otherwise top-down practices will not be seriously challenged.

Highlander provides an excellent example of continuously modifying internal organization to keep in touch with the external demands of issues, federal funding and innovation through research (Glen 1993). As with other groups though, Highlander was slow to recognize the role of gender in affecting forms of oppression through patriarchal ideology and practices, internally and externally. One of the biggest obstacles to many women getting jobs and leading movements is

²⁴ Vernice Miller described the actions of the Southern black churches in producing initial public awareness of environmental racism by waste disposal firms. Environmental School

the lack of childcare, which Highlander began to provide in 1982, linking theories of emancipation to its internal strategy.

External alliances

One of the objectives of this thesis is to show that Appalachian social movements, though appearing to be a series of militant particularisms, with local and unique structures, are also deeply embedded in wider social scales. Networks and alliances provide means of communicating between and learning from other groups, both inside and outside the region. Of particular concern is that each strategy of resistance does not simply transfer the problem elsewhere, a process referred to as Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY). Many social movements are accused of only acting in their own best interests, thus only paying lip service to their stated ideals of justice and democracy. Though it is not my claim that there is a coherent, coordinated regional social movement in Appalachia to negotiate these claims, as much as many activists would like to see this, there are numerous alliances and allegiances formed, both material and symbolic that loosely yet powerfully bind these groups.

Obviously the best model for this sort of web of social ties is Highlander, whose explicit goal is to bring in potential leaders from communities all over the region to teach them the history and strategy of organizing. Its success at fostering representational spaces of resistance and new opportunities for personal and community empowerment is due both to its philosophy and its length of service.

Miners have always depended upon a strong network of affiliation through the UMW for strike support, ties that provide welfare relief and negotiating muscle to each locals' action. At

the root of the union movement is the latent threat of national action so that no community ever feels it is fighting the cause alone. As some of these cases have shown, these organizational ties can be flexible, at Pittston helping to rally support throughout the Appalachian coal fields from both miners and others, necessary to convey a local action into a regional and national spectacle.

One of the premises of this thesis is that these movements represent a strong break with the periods before 1970, both in the range of issues they tackle and the strategies used to pursue their goals. Critical to explaining this difference, is the upsurge in the 1960s of *national* social movements for civil, women's and environmental rights, ideas and experiences that were translated into Appalachian protests at the local scale. Many of these ideas were present in these case studies through the discourses and individuals present, ideas that were important in leveraging outside support and legitimacy to their campaigns. The emotional scenes inside the miners wives' support club owe much to the consciousness-raising sessions of the women's liberation movement, though that is often portrayed as a strictly middle-class affair happening in the progressive urban settings of Boston or Chicago.

Scales of material and symbolic practice

The primary purpose of this thesis is to understand the organizing strategies of Appalachian social movements, using a cultural political framework to foreground the concept of geographical scale. This section will summarize and critique how material scales of ideology and practice are produced, reproduced and occasionally transformed through this highly uneven collective resistance. It is not the intention to suggest a coherence across the region on the intervention of scale, but to demonstrate the possibility of negotiating change. Some of these scales, particularly the body, family and national/global are considerably underdeveloped in these accounts. Their

focus is instead to privilege the *community* and *region* as scales of representation and action. Inevitably these silences were not total, for each scale impacts both movement theory and strategy.

National/global

It was found to be critical in research on Appalachian social and environmental injustice, to constantly reiterate the impact of national and global processes. To do otherwise is to risk reproducing the mistakes that generations of policy makers and researchers have done, explaining poverty as the effect of purely internal relations, which can then be solved through regional scale actions. Appalachia's problems must instead be largely explained by the withdrawal of industrial capitalism following years of exploitation and dependence, aided by local elites. Though the specific forms this hegemony takes are important, especially for implementing the more progressive and autonomous policies, the widespread dominance of capital-state relations must always be considered.

Coal production, amongst other sectors, has been able to dramatically reduce its local dependence in Appalachia, through diversifying supplies into the Western US and abroad, and its continuing deunionization of the remaining work force. Resistance to these strategies persists in trying to make capital accountable, such as the action at Pittston 3 and the establishment of international trade union links, though their success is obviously limited. The region's position within the national economy and imagination are hard to gauge without demarking rigid territorial boundaries. Debates about environmental regulation, welfare reform and international job flight will be critical to future strategies. With regard to the politics being decided by Congress in Washington, it is necessary that alliances are made to the national scale with other

lobby groups. Recent budget cuts to the ARC from \$600m to \$300m a year are further evidence that poverty is seen only for its symptoms, rarely its causes. Funds are available, yet they are still concentrated on large scale projects, such as corridor-H, which will run close to \$1billion.

On the issue of anti-strip mining, SOCM was able to considerably alter federal legislation, if not succeed in an outright ban (Allen 1993). More usually, movements can only react and adapt to changes in national and global processes. Amendments to environmental legislation will seriously impair the ability of communities to control local development, including the abolition of the EPA which though weak can be a useful delaying tool. Many potentially disastrous developments are now only prevented through invoking the endangered species act to protect animal and plant habitats.

Regional consciousness

Appalachia has been utilized as a number of physical and social constructs--as shared imaginary, practical social network and neo-colonial economic region. There is much discussion in these accounts and other texts about the awakening of an Appalachian consciousness, one which brings together traditional folk culture and an independent oppositional progressive politics. In many ways, unless social movements here can transform the regional scale of discourse, they will have failed. Environmental protection measures in one locality will probably just transfer that development to another, politically weaker community--NIMBY; jobs for one place similarly means less investment available for its neighbor. For now, this type of coherent practice must remain an important imaginative goal, rather than a realistically attainable one, so as to maintain this critical position.

Of more immediate concern is the region as a site of political mobilization. In particular of a memory of resistance through the struggle towards unionization, where unions once covered 90% of coal production here. Appalachia remains a largely rural place and though not so physically isolated as it once was, socially there is still an independence between people and places which could be reduced through regional social networks. Highlander and to some extent SOCM try to mediate this process of building and integrating individual community groups. Education and democratic organization are central to this process of negotiating between different scales of discourse, for instance in SOCM's ability to tackle coal operators in the courts using local, state and federal regulations (Allen 1993). This regional strategy was then reinforced through restructuring from a top-down hierarchy, to a constitution of local chapters to integrate grassroots support.

In Kentucky, the Community Farm Alliance (CFA) similarly provides training, credit support and most vitally knowledge to transform agriculture from tobacco to a more diversified and viable structure. CFA believes that the dominant trend of large agrobusiness is environmentally and socially destructive, so lobbies at all scales for smaller, co-operative, farmer-owned and controlled development. Vital to this transformation is the establishment of non-monopoly markets for produce, hence the futility of only local alliances (Hamilton 1990; Hamilton and Ryan 1993).

Community

Though organizing may affect scales other than the local, it is the place-based community which these forms of collective organizing explicitly target for change. The invoking of community as “us” versus “them”--capital, state--is a powerful strategy of resistance. As a site

for establishing unity, community operates similarly to other forms of identity to include certain voices whilst it silences and excludes others. I will take this issue up further in the conclusion. A collective identity is actively produced and reproduced through a combination of dominant ideologies and shared practices, yet its perception as natural helps explain its enduring power.

Cable (1993) provides a fascinating history of the evolution of militant particularism at Yellow Creek, where multiple changes came together to create collective resistance. The shift from just fussin' to an articulated opposition to the tanning company and indeed the whole local political structure as exploitative, is remarkable. "Local" went from a silent, compliant locale to an active agent of considerable political force, drawing on households through existing and newer developing social ties from within the area, alongside laws and progressive green discourse outside of it.

This strategy of mobilizing across scales was also critical at Pittston 3, enabling the creation of free spaces through complimentary tactics. Miners from three states, Appalachian folk culture, the union as memory and political network, all came together to transform the strike dramatically. The eventual success of the strike came from gaining positive media attention and public sympathy, empowering many individuals who joined in the spectacle at the plant and through regional actions of resistance--displaying banners, bumper stickers, boycotting non-union stores (Sessions and Ansley 1993).

A similar sense of community is being produced at Ivanhoe, Virginia, as Weller and other women there (1990) speak of their struggle to redefine place and development. What is missing from virtually all these histories however is a sense of difference--in purpose, understanding and strategy--which is potentially so damaging to social movements. I think this silence emanates largely from the dominance of the local scale in these accounts, which fail to show connections

across scales to regional and global processes. However, they also fail to critically consider household and individual differences within the groups and communities which they claim to represent.

Households, families and body politics

As is common in political analysis, the public domain is here given precedence over private spheres of conflict, something which feminists insist reproduces inequality in both domains. Gender politics only rarely surface into public discourse, so that sexism which is practiced both within the family home and between individuals outside it, is not considered to be a valid political experience. Developing a progressive community politics is considerably weakened if it does not include and transform individual and household experience, in ways which challenge hegemonic discourses such as patriarchy. Though one needs to be careful in using semiotics to infer or “demonstrate” axes of power, it still seems telling that the cover of Fisher’s *Fighting Back* (1993) is of male coal miners at Pittston 3, aggressively surveying the unseen crowd, whose very real presence was critical to the actions success.

Radical and progressive forms of militant particularism thus involve a dynamic process, which continuously challenges material and symbolic scales of practice--the self, collective resistance and hegemonic alliances.

The worst thing that [state officials] ever did was build roads so that we can get out of eastern Kentucky...now we can get up here and raise a little hell (Ruth Covin, Frankfort rally in Szakos 1993).

Chapter VI

Silenced scales: Lessons of community in Appalachia

Free spaces are "public places in the community...the environments in which people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtue...settings between private lives and larger-scale institutions where ordinary citizens can act with dignity, independence and vision."

(Richard Couto (1993) *The memory of miners*, page 166-7.)

In trying to understand how poverty pervades the region, yet not to replicate neo-colonial attitudes that construct Appalachians as passive victims to hegemonic relations and themselves, I have outlined the role of cultural politics as a medium for change. Moving from a purely class analysis to examining place-based political struggle, scholars and activists can incorporate a larger set of theories of exploitation and strategies to resist and transform their social and physical environment. Many of the groups in this study tended to build their movement upon the memory and social networks of coal unions. A move to a politics of community means that they risk losing many of the benefits of that form of alliance; namely a single, coherent analysis of the force with which capital alienates surplus and the means of production from labor. Many groups do, sometimes explicitly, use more universal ideologies of equality and justice, which in some cases did create a more progressive movement. Links to organizations elsewhere help to

ameliorate against the NIMBY effect, of communities fighting each other instead of a common foe.

All of the groups studied here use "community" as a central focus for unity and strength. Many analysts consider community to be inherently conservative, constructing a denial of internal difference and an active silencing of social heterogeneity (Young 1990). This thesis provides examples of what a cultural politics of community looks like, how it expands a traditional assessment of protest to address wider issues of social or environmental justice. Militant particularism is of course only one form of social movement and cultural politics would need to consider other forms of resistance, in particular at the scale of the household and the body.

Theories of change

Research on mapping changes of social struggle in Appalachia requires a conceptual framework, such as cultural politics, to clarify the way questions are formulated and the importance attributed to various phenomena. A series of theoretical statements describe how society operates, how and why individuals and groups from communities of interest and conflict arise between them. Chapter three defined the abstract language of concepts that were useful in describing and explaining the particular instances of cultural and political conflict in the region.

Five categories of concepts were used to define cultural politics. Chapter four used this language to describe the history of regional development in Appalachia, so dramatically tied to the production of coal. These powerful forces are reflected in the landscape, class divisions and the legacy of the union movement. It was helpful to distinguish three foci of power where the main axes of power lie: capital, the state and "the community". The 1970s and 80s were marked

by rapid changes in Appalachia, linked to de-industrialization, with the emergence of the community as the primary focus for social struggles instead of the workplace. Intrinsic to this transformation is the increasing significance of cultural identity to the politics and language that sought social changes, including calls for justice in access to jobs and the management of the environment.

The conceptual framework for this thesis uses structuration theory to articulate power relations between capital, the state and community. Social relations are not a rigid set of structures, each playing out predictable antagonisms between capital and the community, mediated by the state, usually on behalf of the former. Rather, the individuals within each group, the history and geography of these relations are as important as their structural location. These social processes are flexible over time and space, not inevitable, forming habitus, Bordieu's term for semi-durable systems where all manner of strange alliances are possible, not wholly predictable. These relations can be mapped onto the material and symbolic landscapes of places such as Appalachia, reflecting consecutive periods of development. Time and space are thus produced according to the dominant regimes of the day as is attempts to fend off previous and alternative ones. It is these antagonisms that can still be seen in the struggle to control land use (Nesbitt 1997).

Cultural politics is an approach that extends this analysis to the production of personal and group identities and interests, and the strategies they use in everyday life. What are often identified as customary practice, are more often expressions of successful political histories. Rich and varied though this literature is becoming, it can all begin to sound the same. Social movements take up many of the themes of cultural politics, stressing the necessity of collective agency to the development of power structures. Groups act at different scales, so that feminism

lobbies for changes to legislation, media stereotypes and personal relations. Militant particularisms are a type of social movements that focus on local, intense, issue-dominated strategies, but why do they happen in some places and not others? What is it about certain localities that makes capital, the state and the community so dependent upon each other? Differences in local practices will make some places more prone to political mobilization or reactionary allegiances than others, which makes tracing their grounded interests vital if one wishes either to understand or intervene. Once their positions are known, the next question is to find out how each attempts to mobilize across scales, both to individuals and to other organizations and institutions. Those groups that make only local connections will most likely be trapped by having only a limited impact.

History

This conceptual framework was then used to analyse the history of traditional and contemporary approaches used by academics and others to describe poverty in the region. What could we learn not just from what has gone on but the manner in which we write and talk about what went on. Each of the descriptions critically evaluated various discourses on poverty and Appalachia, probing the underlying biases that informed their and our understanding of regional development. This initial phase of critique was necessary before beginning to produce a regional history that better represents the diversity of experiences of communities of exploitation alongside peoples' attempts to collectively organize against it.

Traditional regional geographies are the first approach I looked at, finding the same old list of characteristics to compare and contrast different regions nationally and globally: topography, settlement, raw materials, industry, climate and so on. Too often, the human features come

second to physical ones in explaining differences. The culture of poverty model comes out of sociology and modernization theory, so begins with people, yet looks primarily to explain the pathology of a group against a fictionalized mainstream. Individuals are made dupes of their shared and essentially unchanging failure to live like those of the dominant culture, marginalizing them to a poor existence for which they are largely to blame and they can do little to change.

Dependency theory shifts the blame so that inequality is due to the imperial nature of capitalism, and Appalachia is just another colony whose economy depends upon the exploitation of people and land. The wealth is extracted through the control of local elites in a hierarchy of companies and politicians, a powerful and again ingrained system. The collective impact of these ideas describes a region that is under massive structural exploitation, where only dramatic intervention will lessen the poverty. The ARC and TVA are typical of this approach using top-down methods with a minimum of local knowledge, so that funds mostly reasserting dominant social relations, not seriously challenging them. A socialist policy argues for a transformation in social relations and the transfer of the means of production, preaching empowerment yet with a universalist agenda.

More recent attempts to re-write this history from a bottom up perspective, have focused on the role of communities in challenging all of the above and empowering people in their own battles (Gaventa et al 1990; Fisher 1993). The basis for social struggle in these mountains obviously owes much to history of union organizing around coal production, with periods of both rebellion and quiescence. Understanding why there are these markedly different responses to essentially the same class tensions, is helped by looking at Appalachian culture in the manner the Comaroffs (1991) use to describe colonial regimes of power in South Africa. Hegemony describes the manipulations of powerful interests to control not only production but also the

media, voting patterns, welfare provisions and critically, an ability to prevent dissent even arising (Gaventa 1980). One must appreciate the role of ideology, of how competing ideas for the moral rights of communism, God and the market are continually fought out. Finally, is the tricky, politically loaded problem of consciousness, of somehow gauging how personal and collective minds deal with these mass of complex ideas and practices, and how this "public mood" can shift over time and space.

Out of these conceptual and empirical readings comes a quite simple statement, that from the early twentieth century to the early 1970s, a strong regime of coal and class gripped the lives of many Appalachians. An alliance of capital, state and community interests, the latter represented through the paternalism of John L's UMW, effectively prevented much in the way of social dissent. Then around the turn of the decade, a series of strikes began to rock the hegemony of the various Companies, new militant particularisms emerged to do battle over not just class but justice, jobs and natural resources. This period of increased rebellion both built on previous movements but represents new "free spaces" where ideologies of local democracy, self reliance are fought, and a new regional consciousness is beginning to emerge.

Empirics

What does this cultural politics of community look like? Though these militant particularisms are often in the coalfields and recognize class inequality, their mandate goes beyond the socialist agenda of the 1920s union drives. Drawing on examples of militant particularism from the 1970s and 80s (Gaventa 1990; Fisher 1993), chapter five shows some of the elements common to these groups. Most are locally specific organizations, with actions protesting one salient issue, expressing a radical discontent with the local hegemony through an

alternative ideology of grassroots democratic justice²⁵. Hence the term militant particularism, a community that is empowered through struggle. Yet this term implies a set of quite isolated and disparate actions, where I want to suggest that these communities are inextricably linked to each others' fate.

Each of the cases studies demonstrates that both the idea of collective action for a common purpose as well as the use of social networks was critical to the success of these groups. In comparison to the unions, communities such as Yellow Creek or members of the CFA have a more encompassing sense of common identity beyond simply shared work. Cohesion comes from a sense of shared history, traditions, beliefs that are powerful when put alongside a unity of purpose. Of course community is an amazingly ambivalent discourse and practice. In the closing of ranks that is often a necessary element of political battles, many people are silenced, further marginalized through a process that can drift far from its idealized support of grassroots democracy. Building that common sense of purpose is best illustrated at Yellow Creek, where before YCCC was formed, Cable (1993) identified a situation of "just fussin."

One of the underlying tensions is between recruiting this grassroots membership and the need to move beyond simply local intervention. SOCM was particularly successful with taking the issue of strip mining and building a chapter system for a wider base to prevent the NIMBY problem of one community shifting its problems onto another's. The development of strategies as the issues change and expand is best seen in the case of Highlander as it has developed from voter registration and civil rights into a regional movement for leadership training and building networks between different organizations.

²⁵ Though I concentrate here on militant particularisms, a whole array of other protests and social movements exist both in Appalachia and elsewhere.

Each of the movements studied more or less keeps this idea of social and environmental justice at the core of its concerns, the belief in creating and maintaining free spaces for the expression of economic and cultural freedom from a subordinate position. Within these spaces are fostered desires for self reliance, empowerment and coming up with alternative social agendas. Chapter five delineates three types of movement, naturally more a convenient grouping than indicative of absolute differences. Traditional organizing is based on the UMW model of single-issue, workplace-based opposition to companies such as Pittston, based on a local, shared tradition of employment with the aim of getting specific criteria for improvement met. Community and regional development covers a broader agenda for change, still based on local chapters such as the CFA, but focusing on regional and national, even global scales to escape the dependency of communities on single companies.

Hybrid model groups such as YCCC at first appear to be traditional, local militant particularisms, yet they demonstrate a variety of strategies, both for mobilizing support and ways to go about changing things. Hybrid groups represent the maturing of community politics from a gut reaction over a simple and obvious problem such as the pollution in a creek to the embedded political regime that allows it.

Analysis

Following from an empirical summary of selected militant particularisms in Appalachia during the last 20 years, the second half of the fifth chapter begins to explore some of the salient ideas, differences and similarities. The first and one of the most striking to the most casual observer of culture and protest in Appalachia is the incredible power of memory, the manner in which personal and collective narratives are linked through the past. Earlier in chapter four we

saw how history and geography have been appropriated by academics, using the region as a curiosity or laboratory for their own theories of order and fears of chaos. What moves people to act, and moreover the manner in which they do so is intimately tied to personal memories and reflections on their own, their families and their communities' past lives. It is this common thread of experience and mediation of events--consciousness--that is a foundation for radical actions. In the hollows of southern West Virginia, the memory of Matewan or Harlan in Kentucky are of the union as an alternative social model for mutual dependency and oppositional consciousness, a belief in a "we" more powerful than "them."

Communities are located between two poles in our thinking about them. At one extreme we imbue them with our desire for a safe and innocent dwelling place, an organic entity that will naturally take care of us, fulfilling our dreams for a trusting and mutually beneficent society. On the other hand we are quite aware of the political manipulations that lie beneath all communities. As Young (1990) and Rose (1993) also pointed out, the former concept of community as home, comes in part from the association of community with the female sphere, though it is rarely women who get to control the discourse that bears their tag. The internal structure of social movements is responsible for negotiating these differences, maintaining the benefits of association, of grassroots membership, tempering the ability of leaders to go on personal crusades and maintaining a progressive agenda. All of the groups looked at here experienced these contradictions; what is missing is the many who did not cope so well.

These conclusions are drawn from a very select group of case studies of militant particularism in Appalachia, which begs the question: What if other examples of social movements were used from this region or even other locations? Though these texts used notions of justice (both explicitly and implicitly) and claimed a progressive agenda, to what extent is this

a product of interviews that focus on leaders and members who are fully behind the group's "manifesto." Though the objectives of this thesis were limited to examining how certain community activism imagines, theorizes and strategizes against local hegemony, obviously a more in depth study would look to dissenting voices both within and without of the movement to get a more complete perspective on the context of struggle. Dissenting voices also add critically to our better representing what we call community.

The other frustrating absence in these texts is of any other kind of protest that is not local, public, and collective. Kopples' film on the strike at Harlan is much better at showing the diversity of action and reaction, particularly amongst women, compared to Sessions and Ansley (1993) who still focus on the masculinized site at Pittston 3, inside the captured plant. What of those communities that still failed to organize, whose efforts were frustrated early on, or places that still live in fear of the company and where the status quo is unchallenged? How might these be incorporated into a geography of struggle?

One of the most effective ways to prevent community politics degenerating is to forge external alliances with groups elsewhere. Despite our tendency to imagine communities as singular, largely autonomous creations, people are part of multiple, often quite diverse affinities. Through these other networks, ideas and resources are shared, strategies compared and learned. Connecting communities is also the only way to prevent NIMBY, the dreaded result of so many parochial and reactionary groups who simply displace unwanted development elsewhere.

Translating between scales is perhaps the most important lesson to be gained from studying cultural politics in Appalachian communities. An organization such as Highlander has been wonderfully successful at negotiating the demands of local intervention with the need for training individuals and raising awareness of the need for regional coalitions. Although most of the

groups are perhaps too focused on the local/community scale to the detriment of smaller and larger spaces, I think this focus is the product of the texts I drew on for this thesis, which I argue were written precisely to claim community as their own. Further work needs to be done to trace how other scales from the body to the global are necessary to organizing and how cultural politics can be critical to creating progressive strategies of community intervention.

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